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ASPHODEL

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET"

ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes

VOL. III.

LONDON

JOHN AND ROBERT MAXWELL

MILTON HOUSE, SHOE LANE, FLEET STREET

1881

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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

CONTENTS TO VOL. III.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	"AND COME AGEN, BE IT BY DAY OR NIGHT" .	1
II.	"AY FLETH THE TIME, IT WOL NO MAN ABIDE"	27
III.	"BUT I WOT BEST WHER WRINGETH ME MY SHO"	58
IV.	"FORBID A LOVE AND IT IS TEN TIMES SO WODE"	94
V.	"I MAY NOT DON AS EVERY PLOUGHMAN MAY"	121
VI.	"LOVE IS NOT OLD, AS WHAN THAT IT IS NEW"	148
VII.	"I MEANE WELL BY GOD THAT SIT ABOVE" .	185
VIII.	"THER WAS NO WIGHT, TO WHOM SHE DURSTE PLAIN"	214
IX.	"I WOLDE LIVE IN PEES, IF THAT I MIGHT" .	246
X.	"FOR LOVE AND NOT FOR HATE THOU MUST BE DED"	267
XI.	"IS THERE NO GRACE? IS THERE NO REMEDIE?"	290
XII.	"SENS LOVE HATH BROUGHT US TO THIS PITEOUS END"	329

ASPHODEL.

CHAPTER I.

"AND COME AGEN, BE IT BY DAY OR NIGHT."

THE next three days passed somewhat slowly at South Hill. Unselfish as Madoline was, even her delight in Daphne's engagement could not altogether compensate for Gerald's absence. Life without him hung heavily. She missed him at all those accustomed hours which they had spent together. In the bright noontide, when he rode over fresh and full of vivacity after a late breakfast; in the afternoon dusk, when they had been wont to waste time so pleasantly beside the low wood fire;

in the evening; always. He had been away for three days, and she had received only one shabby little letter—just a few feeble sentences explaining that he had been obliged to run up to London at an hour's notice to see his lawyers upon some dry-as-dust business relating to his Stock Exchange investments. He hoped to settle it all speedily, and come back to Warwickshire. The letter gave her very little comfort.

"I am afraid he is being worried," she said to Daphne, after she had read this brief communication two or three times over. "It is not like one of his letters."

The week after the ball began with one of those dull Sundays which come down upon country life like an atmosphere of gloom, and seem to blot out all the pleasantness of creation. A drizzling Scotch-misty Sabbath, painfully suggestive of Glasgow and the Free Kirk. Madoline and Daphne walked to church, waterproofed to the eyes, and assisted sadly at a damp service; the whole congregation smelling of macintoshes; the drip drip from umbrellas on the encaustic pavement

audible in the pauses of the Liturgy. It was a rule at South Hill that horses and coachmen should rest on the seventh day, save under direst pressure. Neither of the sisters objected to a wet walk. Edgar met them at church, having tramped over through mud and rain, much to the disgust of his mother, who deemed that to be absent from one's parish church on a Sunday morning was a social misdemeanour not to be atoned for by the most fervent worship in a strange tabernacle. He joined Lina and her sister in the porch, and walked home with them by moist fields and a swollen Avon, whose fringe of willows never looked more funereal than on this dull wintry noontide, when the scant bare shoots stood straight up against a sky of level gray.

"Any news from Goring?" asked Edgar, by way of making himself agreeable.

"Not since I saw you last. I fancy he must be very busy. He is usually such a good correspondent."

"Busy!" cried Edgar, laughing heartily at the idea. "What can he have to be busy about?

—unless it's the fit of a new suit of clothes, or some original idea in shooting-boots which he wants carried out, or the choice of a new horse; but, for that matter, I believe he doesn't seriously care what he rides. Busy, indeed! He can't know what work means. His bread was buttered for him on both sides, before he was born."

"Isn't that rather a juvenile notion of yours, Edgar?" asked Madoline. "I believe the richest people are often the busiest. Property has its duties as well as its rights."

"No doubt. But a rich man can always take the rights for his own share, and pay somebody else to perform the duties," answered Edgar shrewdly. "And I should think Goring was about the last man to let his property be a source of care to him."

"In this instance I am afraid he is being worried about it," said Lina decisively; and with a look which seemed to say, "nobody has any right to have an opinion about my lover."

The day was a long one, even with the assistance of Edgar in the task of getting through

it. Daphne, considerably sobered by her engagement, behaved irreproachably all the afternoon and evening; but she stifled a good many yawns, until the effort made her eyes water.

Her father had been unusually kind to her since the announcement of her betrothal. All his anxieties about her—and it had been the habit of his mind to regard her as a source of trouble and difficulty, or even of future woe—were now set at rest. Married in the early bloom of her girlhood to such a man as Edgar, all her life to come would be so fenced round and protected, so sheltered and guarded by love and honour, that perversity itself could scarce go astray.

"Daphne's mother was spoiled before I married her," he told himself, remembering the misery of his second marriage. "If I had won her before her heart was corrupted our lives might have been different."

It seemed to him, looking at the matter soberly, that there could be no better alliance for his younger daughter than this with Edgar Turchill. He had seen them together continually, in a com-

panionship which seemed full of pleasure for both: boating together, at lawn-tennis, at billiards, sympathising, as it appeared to him from his superficial point of view, in every thought and feeling. It never occurred to him that this was a mere surface sympathy, and that the hidden deeps of Daphne's mind and soul were far beyond the plummet-line of Edgar's sympathy or comprehension. Sir Vernon had made up his mind that his younger daughter was a frivolous butterfly-being, who needed only frivolous pleasures and girlish amusements to make her happy.

Everybody, or almost everybody, approved of Daphne's engagement. It was pleasant to the girl to live for a little while in an atmosphere of praise. Even Aunt Rhoda, upon whose being Daphne had exercised the kind of influence which some people feel when there is a cat in the room, even Aunt Rhoda professed herself delighted. She came over between the showers and the church services upon this particular Sunday, on purpose to tell Daphne how very heartily she approved of her conduct.

"You have acted wisely for once in your life," she said sententiously; "I hope it is the beginning of many wise acts. I suppose you will be married at the same time as Lina. The double wedding will have a very brilliant effect, and will save your father ever so much trouble and expense."

"Oh no; I should not like that," cried Daphne hurriedly.

"You wouldn't like a double wedding!" ejaculated Mrs. Ferrers indignantly. "Why, what a vain, arrogant little person you must be. I suppose you fancy your own importance would be lessened if you were married at the same time as your elder sister?"

"No, no, Aunt; indeed, it is not that. I am quite content to seem of no account beside Lina. I love her far too dearly to envy her superiority. But—if—when—I am married I should like it to be very quietly—no people looking on—no fuss—no fine gowns. When my father and Edgar have made up their minds that the proper time has come, I should like just to walk into my

uncle's church early some morning, with papa and Lina, and for Edgar to meet us there, just as quietly as if we were poor people, and for no one to be told anything about it."

"What a romantic schoolgirlish notion!" said Mrs. Ferrers contemptuously. "Such a marriage would be a discredit to your family; and I should think it most unlikely my brother would ever give his consent to such a hole-and-corner way of doing things."

The one person at South Hill who absolutely refused to smile upon Daphne's engagement was Madoline's faithful Mowser. That devoted female received the announcement with shrugs and ominous shakings of a head which carried itself as if it were the living temple of wisdom, and in a manner incomplete without that helmet of Minerva which obviously of right belonged to it.

"You don't seem as pleased as the rest of us at the notion of this second marriage," said good-tempered Mrs. Spicer, housekeeper and cook, to whom "the family" was the central point of the universe; sun, moon, and stars, earth and ocean,

and the residue of mankind, being merely so much furniture created to make "the family" comfortable.

"I hear and see and say nothing," answered Mowser, as oracular in most of her utterances as Friar Bacon's brazen head. "Time will show."

"Well, all I can say is," said Jinman, "that our Miss Daphne is an uncommon pretty girl, and deserves a good husband. She has just that spice of devilry in her which I like in a woman. Your even-tempered girls are too insipid for my taste."

"I suppose you would have admired the spice of devilry in Miss Daphne's mar," retorted Mowser venomously, "which made her run away from her husband."

"No, Mrs. Mowser; I draw the line at that. A man may want to get rid of his wife, but he don't like her to take the initial"—Mr. Jinman meant initiative—"and bolt. A spice of devilry is all very well, but one doesn't want the entire animal. I like a shake of the grater in my negus, but I don't desire the whole nutmeg. But I do

think that it's a low-minded thing to cast up Miss Daphne's mar whenever the young lady's talked about. Every tub must stand on its own bottom."

"Well, Mr. Jinman," said Mowser, "all I hope is, that Miss Daphne will carry through her engagement now she's made it. She's welcome to her own sweetheart, as far as I am concerned, so long as she doesn't hanker after other people's."

The phrase sounded vague, and neither Mr. Jinman, nor Mrs. Spicer, nor the coachman (who had dropped in to tea and toast and a poached egg or two in the housekeeper's room) had any clear idea of what Mowser meant, except that it was something ill-natured. On that point there was no room for doubt.

Another week wore on, the second after the ball, and Gerald Goring had not yet returned. He wrote every other day, telling Madoline all he had been doing; the picture-galleries, and theatres he had visited, the clubs at which he had dined; yet in all these letters of his, affectionate as they were, there was a tone which sustained in Lina's

mind the idea that her lover was in some way troubled or worried. The few words which gave rise to this impression were slight enough; she hardly knew how or why the notion had entered her mind, but it was there, and remained there, and it increased her anxiety for his return to an almost painful degree. While she was expecting him daily and hourly, a much longer letter arrived, which on the first reading almost broke her heart:

"My dear One,

"I write in tremendous excitement and flurry of mind to tell you something which I fear may displease you; yet at the very beginning I will disarm your wrath by saying that if you put a veto upon this intention of mine it shall be instantly abandoned. Subject to this, dear love, I am going, in hot haste, to Canada. Don't be startled, Lina. It is no more nowadays than going to Scotland. Men I know go across for the salmon-fishing every autumn, and are absent so short a time that their friends hardly miss them from the beaten tracks at home.

"And now I will tell you what has put this Canadian idea into my head. I have for some time been feeling a little below par—mopish, lymphatic, disinclined for exertion of any kind. My holiday in the Orkneys was a *dolce far niente* business, which did me no real good. I went the other day to a famous doctor in Cavendish Square, a man who puts our prime ministers on their legs when they are inclined to drop, like tired cab horses, under the burden of the public weal. He ausculted me carefully, found me sound in wind and limb, but nerves and muscles alike in need of bracing. 'You want change of scene and occupation,' he said, 'and a climate that will make you exert yourself. Go to Vienna and skate.' I daresay this would have been good advice for a man who had never seen Vienna; but as I know that brilliant capital by heart, with all its virtues, and a few of its vices, I rejected it. 'Please yourself,' said my physician, pocketing his fee; 'but I recommend complete change, and the hardest climate you can bear.' I do not feel sure that I intended to take his advice, or should have thought any more

about it; but I happened to meet Lord Loftus Berwick, the Duke of Bamborough's youngest son, and an old Eton chum of mine, in the smoking-room at the Reform that very evening, and he told me he was just off to Canada, dilated enthusiastically upon the delights of that wintry region, and the various sports congenial to the month of February. He goes *viâ* New York, Delaware and Hudson Railway to Montreal, thence to Quebec, and from Quebec by the Intercolonial Railway to Rimouski, where he is to charter a small schooner and cross the St. Lawrence to the mouth of the Natashquau River, which river belongs to two particular friends of his, both distinguished comedians, and men of unbounded popularity on each side of the Atlantic. Here Loftus proposes to hunt cariboo, moose, elk, and I don't know what else. But before he puts on his snow-shoes, loads his sledges, and harnesses his dogs for those happy hunting-grounds, he is going to revel in the more civilised and sophisticated pleasures of a Canadian winter, curling-clubs, sleigh-rides around the mountain at Montreal, toboggining at the Falls of Montmorenci, near

Quebec, and so on. Just the thing for me, thought I—a hard climate, only about eight days' voyage—if my dearest did not object to my being away from my natural place at her feet for five or six weeks. At my hinting a wish to accompany him Loftus became still more enthusiastic, and was eager to have the whole thing settled that moment. And now, love, it is for you to decide. I think the run would do me good; but perish the thought of benefit to me if it must be bought at the price of pain to you. Loftus is going in the *Cunard*, which leaves Liverpool the day after to-morrow. Telegraph your wishes, and be assured beforehand of obedience from your devoted slave,

"Gerald Goring."

Madoline's first thoughts were of the pain of being parted from her lover, whose presence had for so long been the sunshine of her days, and so much a part of her life, that she seemed scarcely to live while he was away from her. Existence was reduced to a mere mechanical moving about,

and doing duties which had lost all their savour. But these first thoughts, being selfish, were swiftly succeeded in a mind so entirely unselfish by other considerations. If it were for Gerald's good that he should go to the other end of the world, that they should be parted for much longer than the five or six weeks of which he spoke so lightly, it would not have been in Madoline's nature to desire him to forego even a possible advantage. She had fancied sometimes of late that he was occasionally dull and low-spirited; and now this letter explained all. He was out of health. He had been leading too quiet and womanish a life, no doubt, in his willingness to spend his days in her society. He had foregone all those hardy exercises and field sports which are so necessary to a man who has no serious work in life. Madoline's telegram ran thus:

"Go by all means, if you think the change will do you good. I tremble at the idea of your crossing the sea at this time of the year. Let me see you

before you go. If you cannot come here, I will ask my aunt to go to London with me that I may at least bid you good-bye."

The answer came as quickly as electricity could bring it, and although laconic, was satisfactory: "I will be with you about five o'clock this afternoon."

"Dear fellow, how little he thinks of the trouble of travelling so many miles to please me," thought Madoline; and the idea of her lover's affection sustained her against the pain of parting.

"Next year I shall have the right to go wherever he goes," she told herself.

Daphne heard of the Canadian expedition, but said so little about it that Lina wondered at her coolness.

"I thought you would have been more surprised," she said.

"Did you? Why, there is really nothing startling or uncommon in the idea," answered Daphne smilingly. "This rushing about the world for sport seems the most fashionable thing among

young men with plenty of money. The Society Journals are always telling us how Lord This or Sir John That has gone to the Rockies to shoot wild sheep, or to the North Pole for bears, or to Hungary or Wallachia, or the Balkan range. The beaten tracks count for nothing nowadays."

When the afternoon came, Lina was alone to receive her lover. Daphne had been seized with a dutiful impulse towards her aunt, and had gone to drink tea at the Rectory, with Edgar in attendance upon her.

"Won't you defer your duty-visit till to-morrow, and wish Gerald good-bye?" asked Lina, when Daphne proposed the expedition.

"No, dear; you can do that for me. This is an occasion on which you ought to have him all to yourself. You will have so much to say to each other."

"If it were mother, she would occupy all the time in begging him to wear flannels, put cork soles in all his boots, and avoid damp beds," said Edgar, laughing. "Now, Daphne, put on your hat as quick as you can. It's a lovely afternoon for a walk across

the fields. If this frost continues we shall have skating presently."

The daylight faded slowly; a bright frosty day, a clear and rosy sunset. Lina sat by the pretty hearth in her morning-room, and exactly as the clock struck five the footman brought in her dainty little tea-tray, set out the table before the fire, and lighted three or four wax-candles in the old Sèvres candelabra on the mantelpiece. Here she and her lover would be secure from the interruption of callers, which they could not be if in the drawing-room.

Five minutes after the hour there came the sound of wheels upon the gravel drive, a loud ring at the bell, and in the next instant the door of the morning-room was opened and Gerald came in, looking bulkier than usual in his furred travelling coat.

"Dear Gerald, this is so good of you!" said Madoline, rising to welcome him.

"Dearest!" he took both her hands, and stood looking at her in the firelight, with a countenance full of tenderness—a mournful tenderness—as if he

were saddened by the thought of parting. "You are not angry with me for leaving you for a few weeks?"

"Angry, when you are told the change is necessary for your health! How could you think me so selfish? Let me look at you. Yes; you are looking ill—pale and wan. Gerald, you have been ill, seriously ill, perhaps, since you left here, and you would not tell me for fear of alarming me. I am sure that it is so. Your letters were so hurried, so different from——"

"My dear girl, you are mistaken. I told you the exact truth about myself when I owned to feeling mopish and depressed. I have had no actual illness; but I feel that a run across the Atlantic will revive and invigorate me."

"And it is quite right of you to go, if the voyage is not dangerous in this weather."

"Dear love, it is no more dangerous than calling a hansom to take one down Regent Street. The hansom may come to grief somehow, or there may be a gale between Liverpool and New York; but there is hardly any safer way a man can dispose

of his life than to trust himself to a Cunard steamer."

"And do you think you will enjoy yourself in Canada?"

"As much as I can enjoy myself anywhere, away from you. According to my friend Loftus, a Canadian winter is the acme of bliss; and if the winter should break up early we may contrive to get a little run into the Hudson's Bay country, and a glimpse of the Rockies before we come home."

"That sounds as if you meant to stay rather a long time," said Lina, with a touch of anxiety.

"Indeed, no, dear. At latest I shall be with you before April is half over. Think what is to happen early in May."

"My coming of age. It seems so absurd to come of age at twenty-five, when one is almost an old woman."

"An old woman verily. A girl as fresh in youthful purity as if her cheek still wore the baby-bloom of seventeen summers! But have you forgotten something else that is to happen next May, Lina—our wedding?"

"There has been nothing fixed about that," faltered Madoline; "except, perhaps, that it is to be this year. My father has not said a word as to the actual time, and I know that he wants to keep me as long as he can."

"And I think you know that I want to have you at the Abbey as soon as I can. I am getting to loathe that big house, for lack of your presence to transform it into a home. We must be married in May, dearest. Remember we have only been waiting for you to come of age, and for all dry-as-dust questions of property to be settled. If we had been Darby the gardener and Joan the dairy-maid, we should have been married four years ago, shouldn't we, Lina?"

"I suppose so," she answered, blushing, and taking refuge in the occupation of pouring out the tea, adjusting the egg-shell cups and saucers, the slender little rat-tailed spoons, all the dainty affectations and quaintnesses of high-art tea-drinking, "Darby and Joan are always so imprudent."

"Yes, but they are often happy. They marry foolishly, and perhaps starve a little after marriage;

but they wed while the first bloom is on their love. Come, Lina, say that we shall be married early in May."

"I can promise nothing without my father's consent. My aunt was suggesting that Daphne and I should be married on the same day."

"Did she?" asked Gerald, his head bent, his hands engaged with his cup and saucer. "Two victims led to the altar: Iphigenia and Polyxena, and no likelihood of a hind being substituted for either young lady. Don't you think there is a dash of vulgarity in a double wedding: a desire to make the very most of the event, to intensify the parade: two sets of bridesmaids, two displays of presents, two honeymoon departures: all the tawdriness and show and artificiality of a modern wedding exaggerated by duplication."

"I think that is rather Daphne's idea. She begs that she and Edgar may be married very quietly, without fuss of any kind."

"I had no idea that Daphne was capable of such wisdom. I thought she would have asked for four

and-twenty bridesmaids," said Gerald with a cynical laugh.

"She is much more sensible than you have ever given her credit for being," answered Madoline, a little offended at his tone. "She has behaved sweetly since her engagement."

"And—you—think—she—is—happy?"

How slowly he said this, stirring his tea all the while, as if the words were spoken mechanically, his thoughts being wide-away from them.

"Do you suppose I should be satisfied if I were not sure, in my own mind, of her happiness? How can she fail to be happy? She is engaged to a thoroughly good man, who adores her; and if—if she is not quite as deeply in love with him as he is with her, there is no doubt that her affection for him will increase and strengthen every day."

"Naturally. He will flatter and fool her till—were it only from sheer vanity—she will ultimately find him necessary to her existence. I knew he had only to persevere in order to win her. I told him so last summer."

"And Edgar is grateful to you for encouraging

him when he was inclined to despair. He told me so yesterday. But do not let us talk of Daphne all the time. I want you to tell me about yourself. How good it was of you to come down to say good-bye!"

"Could I do less, dearest? Good-byes are always painful, even when the parting is to be of the briefest, as in this case: but from the moment I knew you wished to see me it was my duty to come."

"Can you stay here to-night?"

"I can stay exactly ten minutes, and no more. I have to catch the half-past six express."

"You are not going to the Abbey?"

"No. I have written to my steward, and I am such a *roi fainéant* at the best of times that my coming or going makes very little difference. I leave the new hot-houses under your care and governance, subject to MacCloskie, who governs you. All their contents are to be for the separate use and maintenance of your rooms while I am away."

"I shall be smothered with flowers."

"May there be never a thorn among them! And now, love, adieu. This time to-morrow I shall be steaming out of the Mersey. I have to see that Dickson has not come to grief in the preparation of my outfit. A man wants a world of strange things for Canada, according to the outfitters. My own love, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Gerald dearest, best, good-bye. Every wind that blows will make me miserable while you are on the sea. You'll let me know directly you arrive, won't you? You'll put me out of my misery as soon as you can?"

"I'll cable the hour I land."

"That will be so good of you," she said, going with him to the door.

How calm and clear the frosty evening looked! how vivid the steely stars up yonder above the feathery tree-tops! how peaceful and happy all the world!

"God bless you, dear one!" said each to each,

as they kissed their parting kiss—both hearts so heavy; but one so pure and free from guile; the other so weighed down by secret cares that could not be told.

CHAPTER II.

"AY FLETH THE TIME, IT WOL NO MAN ABIDE."

NEARLY six months had gone since that wintry parting, when the lovers clasped hands and blessed each other under the sign of Aries; and now it was midsummer, and all the fields were green, and the limes were breaking into blossom, and the hawthorn-flower was dead, and the last of the blue-bells had faded, and all the white orchard-blooms, the tender loveliness of spring, belonged to the past; for the beauty of earth and nature is a thing of perpetual change, so closely allied with death that in every rapture there is the beginning of a regret.

Gerald Goring had returned, not quite so soon

as he had promised beside the winter hearth, but in time to offer birthday greetings to Lina, and to assist in those legal preparations and argumentations which preceded the marriage settlement; in this case a formidable document, involving large interests, and full of consideration for children and grandchildren yet unborn; for daughters dying unmarried, or requiring to be dowered for marriage; for sons who might have to make marriage settlements of their own. There was to be a complete family history, put hypothetically, in Miss Lawford's marriage settlement.

Vainly had Lina tried to dower her sister with half, or at least some portion of her own wealth. Daphne obstinately refused to accept any such boon; and Edgar as obstinately sustained her in her determination.

"I won't accept a penny," said she.

"I don't want a halfpenny with her," said he; a refusal which Mrs. Turchill considered supreme folly on the part of son and daughter-in-law; for what improvements might have been made at Hawksyard with a few spare thousands,

whereas her son's income, though ample for all the needs and comforts of this life, left no margin for building.

"Why should not Daphne have a range of hot-houses like those Mr. Goring has built for her sister?" argued Mrs. Turchill. "Or why should not you rebuild the stables, which are dreadfully old-fashioned?"

"I would not change the dear old fashion for worlds, mother, now that I have made every sanitary improvement," answered Edgar; "least of all would I improve Hawksyard into a modern house with Goring's money."

"But it is not Mr. Goring's money that is offered; it is Miss Lawford's."

"That is the same thing. The loss would be his. Don't talk any more about it, mother; Daphne and I have made up our minds."

This was decisive; for Mrs. Turchill knew that Daphne's word was Edgar's law. She was reconciled to the idea of the marriage, but in her confidences with Rebecca, she could not help talking of her son's attachment as an infatuation.

Gerald had come back considerably improved in health and spirits by his Canadian and Hudson's Bay adventures. He had crossed the Turtle Mountain, and the arid plains beyond, and from the crest of one of the Sweet Grass Hills had seen the rugged and snowy outline of the Rockies, standing out in full relief against the western sky-line. He had shot a bear or two, and had some experience of wolves. He had eaten pemmican, and ridden a woolly horse; he had slept at a Hudson's Bay station, and had passed a night or two half-frozen and wholly awake, under canvas. Variety and adventure had done him good physically and mentally; and he told himself that of that fever which had tormented him when he left England—a fever of foolish longings and fond regrets, idle thoughts of things that might have been—he was cured wholly. Yet who shall say whether time might not show some resemblance between this cure and that of a dangerous lunatic, who is discharged from Bedlam a sane man, and who cuts his mother's head off with a carving-knife a fortnight after his release?

The double wedding was to take place in October. Nothing could induce Sir Vernon to consent to an earlier date.

"I shall lose my darling soon enough," he said, ignoring Daphne in his calculations of loss. "Let me keep her till the end of the summer. Let us spend this one summer together. Who knows that it may not be my last?"

Any wish expressed by her father would have governed Madoline's conduct, and this wish, expressed so stringently, could not be disregarded. Sir Vernon was frequently ailing, in a languid half-hearted way, which looked like hypochondriasis, but might be actual disease, and a part of that organic evil which was never clearly described. His doctor recommended an entire change of scene—Switzerland, the Engadine, if he could make up his mind to travel so far, and to be satisfied with the simpler diet and accommodation of that skyey world. There was a good deal of discussion, and it was ultimately settled that Sir Vernon and his daughters should start for Switzerland at the end of June, and move quietly about there, studying

the invalid's pleasure in all things. Sir Vernon set his face against the Engadine, preferring the more civilised shores of Lake Leman, which he knew by heart.

Daphne had never been beyond Fontainebleau, and was enraptured at the idea of seeing snow-clad mountains and strange people. Gerald and Edgar were to be of the party, and they were only to return to England in time for the double wedding. The sisters were to be married on the same day, after all. That had been settled for them arbitrarily by family and friends, despite Daphne's objection; and Warwickshire people were already beginning to speculate upon the details of the ceremony, and to wonder what dean or bishop would be privileged to tie the knot, assisted by the Rev. Marmaduke Ferrers.

Daphne's conduct since her engagement had been unobjectionable. Nobody could deny her sweetness, or could fail to approve the sobriety which had come over her manners and conversation. Her hot fits and cold fits, her high spirits and low spirits, were all over. She was uniformly

amiable and uniformly grave—not taking rapturous pleasure in anything, but seemingly contented with her lot in life, devoted in her affection to her sister, unvaryingly kind to her lover. Edgar was never tired of thanking heaven for the blessedness of his lot. He had remitted his tenants five-and-twenty per cent. of their March rents; not that there was any special need for such indulgence, but because he longed to be generous to somebody, and to disseminate his overflowing joy.

"I shall do the same for you next October, in honour of my marriage," he said in his speech at the audit dinner; "and after that I shall want all the money you can pay me, as a family man."

Madoline, utterly happy in her lover's society, after that interval of severance which had seemed so long and dreary, cared very little where their lives were to be spent, so long as they were to be together. Yet the idea of revisiting Lake Leman —which she had seen and loved seven years ago in a quiet pilgrimage with her father—with Gerald

for her attendant and companion, had a certain fascination.

"It is rather like anticipating our honeymoon, is it not, dear?" he asked laughingly. "But when the honeymoon comes we shall find some new world to explore."

"Would you like to take me to the Red River?"

"I think that would be a shade too rough, even for your endurance. The Italian lakes, and a winter in Rome, would suit us better. It is all very well for a man to travel in a district where he has to cover his face with a muffler, and head the driving snow, till he is nearly suffocated with his frozen breath, and has to get himself thawed carefully at the first camp-fire; but that kind of experience lasts a long time, and it is pleasing to fall back upon the old habit of luxurious travelling, and to ride in a *coupé* through Mont Cenis or St. Gotthard, and to arrive at one's destination without any large risk of being swallowed whole in a swamp, or burned alive in a prairie fire."

"I shall delight in seeing Rome with you," Madoline answered gently.

"I thought you would like it. I really know my Rome. It is a subject I have studied thoroughly, and I shall love playing cicerone for you."

It was midsummer, a perfect midsummer evening, the placid sky still faintly tinted with rose and amethyst yonder where the sun had just gone down behind the undulating line of willows. The little town of Stratford lay in its valley, folded in a purple cloud, only the slender church spire rising clear and sharp against that tranquil evening sky. Daphne had stolen away from Madoline and Gerald, who were sitting on the terrace, while Edgar, chained to his post in the dining-room by a lengthy monologue upon certain political difficulties, with which Sir Vernon was pleased to favour him, vainly longed for liberty to rejoin his idol. She had put on her hat, and had set out upon a lonely pilgrimage to Stratford. They were all to leave South Hill early to-morrow, and it was Daphne's fancy to

bid good-bye to the church which sheltered those ashes it were the worst of sacrilege to disturb.

It was an idle fancy, no doubt, engendered of a mind prone to idle thoughts; but Daphne, having no urgent occupation for her time this evening, fancied she had a right to indulge it.

"I am going for a little walk," she had told Edgar, as she left the dining-room; "don't fidget yourself about me."

From which moment poor Edgar had been in agonies of restlessness, turning an ear deafer than any adder's to Sir Vernon's disquisition upon the critical state of the country, and the utter incapacity of the men in office to deal with such a crisis, and inwardly chafing against every extension of the subject which prolonged the seemingly endless discourse.

"A little walk!" and why, and where, and with whom? Vainly did Edgar's strained gaze explore the distant landscape. From his position at the dinner-table, he could see a fine range of country ten or fifteen miles away; but never a glimpse of terrace or garden by which Daphne

must go. And it was the rule of his life to show Sir Vernon the extremity of respect, an almost old-fashioned and Grandisonian reverence. Therefore to cut short that prosy discourse was impossible.

The blessed moment of release came at last. Sir Vernon finished his claret with a sigh, and left nation and ministry to their fate. Edgar hurried to the terrace. Gerald and Madoline were sipping their coffee at a little rustic bamboo table, the Maltese Fluff lying luxuriously in his mistress's silken lap.

"Have you any idea where Daphne has gone?" Edgar asked despairingly.

"No, indeed. I saw her stroll down towards the river. Perhaps she has gone to see her aunt."

"Thanks, yes, I daresay," replied Edgar, speeding off towards the Rectory without waiting to consider whether the clue were worth following.

While Mr. Turchill was hastening across the fields at a racing pace, Daphne was seated in her boat, quietly drifting towards Stratford, along a

dreamy twilit river, where every willow had a ghostly look in the evening dimness.

She was full of grave thoughts on this her last night in Warwickshire. It was more than a year—a year and a quarter—since she had come home for good, as the phrase goes, and a year and a quarter makes a large section of a young life. The years are so long in early youth, when the heart and mind live so fast, and every day is a history; so strangely different from the monotonous years of middle age, which glide past unawares, like the level flats seen from a canal-boat, each meadow so like the last that the voyager is unconscious of progress, till he feels the salt breath of Death's ocean creeping across the low marshes of declining life, and knows that his journey is nearly done.

To Daphne that year at South Hill had been a lifetime. How ardently she had felt and thought and suffered within the time; what resolutions made and broken; what fevers of dangerous delight, and dull intervals of remorse; what wild wicked hopes; what black despair! Looking back

at the time that was gone and dead, she was inclined to exaggerate its joys, to gloss over its pain.

"At the worst I have been happy with him," she said, remembering how much of that vanished time had been spent in Gerald Goring's society, "though he is nothing to me, and never can be anything to me but a man to be shunned; yet we have been happy together, and that is something."

She remembered some lines of Dryden's which Gerald had quoted in her presence:

> To-morrow do thy worst, for I have lived to-day.
> Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
> The joys I have possessed, in spite of Fate, are mine.

She had lived her day. There had been moments in the past; moments that had stirred the deeps of her soul with a power as mysterious as the sweep of the angelic wing upon Bethsaida's pool; moments when she had fancied herself beloved by him, whom to love was treason. These stood out upon the page of memory in fiery characters, and in their supernal light all the rest of the record seemed dull and dark. There had been hours of

unquestioning bliss when she had in no wise reasoned upon her happiness, when she had not asked herself whether she was loved or scorned, but had been happy as the summer insects are among the flowers, vivified by the sunshine, asking nothing but to live and enjoy that glorious warmth and brightness. So at times she had abandoned herself to the delight of his society, whom she had loved from the hour of their first meeting, giving all her heart and mind to him at once, as utterly as Juliet gave hers to Romeo.

She had lived her day. The long vista of to-morrow and to-morrow opened before her joyless gaze, and she could look down the tranquil path it was her fate to tread, a wife beloved and honoured, a sister fondly loved, a daughter reconciled with her father, mistress of a fine old house, full of quaint and pleasant associations, established for life in the heart of rural scenes which her soul loved. Surely it was not a destiny to be contemplated with such profound sadness as shadowed her face to-night, while she leant listlessly on her oars and drifted down the full dark river.

All was very quiet below the bridge when she landed at the boat-builder's yard, and left her craft in charge of that amphibious and more than half-intoxicated hanger-on who is generally to be found waiting on fortune at every landing-stage. The walk to the church was dark and shadowy; lights twinkling in the low cottage windows; glimpses of home-life dimly seen through open doors. Daphne walked quickly to the avenue of limes, that green odorous aisle which leads to the porch. There had been evening service, and the lights were still burning here and there, and the heavy old door stood ajar. Daphne pushed it gently open, and crept into the church, past the stately monuments of mediæval Cloptons, whose marble effigies reposed in solemn pomp upon sculptured tombs, rich in armorial emblazonment. In the faint light and mysterious shadow the stony figures looked like real sleepers, waiting for the last dread summons. Daphne stole past them with noiseless footfall, and crept along the aisle to the lovely old chancel, where, just within the altar-rails, William Shakespeare takes his last earthly rest.

The sexton came out of the vestry to see whose footfall it was that fell so lightly on that everlasting flint. Daphne was standing by the altar-rail in a reverie, looking up at the calm sculptured face, so serene in its contentment with a life which, in the vast range and dominion of a mind that was in itself a kingdom, had held all things worth having. These are the full and rounded lives, complete and perfect in themselves, the calm and placid lives of contemplative men, for whom the gates of the spiritual universe stand ever open, who are in no wise dependent upon the joys, and gains, and triumphs of this work-a-day world.

"Were you always happy, my calm-faced Shakespeare?" wondered Daphne. "Could you have sounded all the deeps of sorrow without having yourself suffered? I think not. Yet there seems hardly any room in your life for great sorrow, except perhaps in the loss of that child who died young. Was Ann Hathaway your only love, I wonder—you who wrote so sweetly of sorrowful hopeless love—or was there another, another whom we know as Juliet, and Imogen,

and Cordelia: another from whom you always lived far apart, yet whom you always loved?"

"I beg your pardon, miss," said the sexton; "I'm going to lock up the church."

"Let me stay a few minutes longer," pleaded Daphne, taking out her purse. "I am going away from England to-morrow, and I have come to say good-bye to the dear old church."

"Are you going to be away long, miss?"

"Nearly three months."

"That's a very short time," said the old man, pocketing Daphne's half-crown. "I thought perhaps you were going away for many years—going to settle somewhere across the sea. It hardly seems like saying good-bye to the church if you are to be back among us this side Michaelmas."

"No," said Daphne dreamily, looking along the shadowy nave, where broken rays of moonlight from the painted windows shone upon the dark oak benches like dropped jewels. "It is not long; but one never knows. To-night I feel as if it were going to be for ever. I am so fond of this old church."

"No wonder, miss. It's a beautiful church. You should hear the Americans admire it. I suppose they've nothing half as good in their country."

The moon was up when Daphne left the church, and walked round by head-stones and memorial-crosses to the shaded path beside the river, where here and there a seat on the low wall invited the weary to repose in the cool shade of ancient elms. The broad full river looked calm and bright under the moonlit sky; the murmur of the weir sounded like a lullaby.

Daphne walked slowly to the end of the path, and stood for a long time looking down at the river. She felt curiously loath to leave the spot. Yet it was time she were on her homeward way. They would miss her, perhaps, and be perplexed, and even anxious about her. But in the next moment she dismissed the idea of any such anxiety on her behalf.

"Lina will not think about me while Mr. Goring is with her; and my father is not likely to trouble himself. There is only poor Edgar, and he will

guess which way I have come, and follow me if he takes it into his head to be uneasy."

Reassured by this idea, Daphne resolved to gratify her fancy for farewells to the uttermost, and to say good-bye to the house where the poet was born. Stratford streets were very empty and quiet at this period of the summer evening, and she met only a few people between the churchyard and the sacred dwelling. To a stranger, entrance into the sanctuary at such an hour would have been out of the question; but Daphne was on friendly terms with the lady-custodians of the temple, and knew she could coax them to unlock the door for her pleasure. Never lamp or candle was admitted within the precincts, but on such a night as this there would be no need for artificial light; and Daphne only wanted to creep into the quaint old rooms, to look round her quietly for a minute or two, and feel the spirit of the place breathing poetry into her soul.

"I have such a strange fancy that I may never see these things again," she said to herself as she stood in the moonlit garden, where only such flowers grew as were known in Shakespeare's time.

The two ladies lived in a snug little house with a strictly Elizabethan front, and casement windows that looked into the poet's garden. All that taste, and research, and an ardent love could do had been done to make Shakespeare's house and its surroundings exactly what they were when Shakespeare lived. The wise men of Stratford had brought their offerings, in the shape of old pictures, and manuscripts, and relics of all kinds; the rooms had been restored to their original form and semblance; and pilgrims from afar had no longer need to blush for the nation which owned such a poet and held his memorials so lightly. A very different state of things from the vulgar neglect which obtained when Washington Irving visited Stratford.

The maiden warders of the house were a little surprised at so late a visit, but received Daphne kindly all the same, and were disposed to be indulgent to girlish enthusiasm in so worthy a cause. It was against the rules to open the house at so late an hour; but as no light was needed, Daphne should be allowed just to creep in, and bid

good-bye to the hearth beside which Shakespeare had played at his mother's knees.

"One would think you were going away for a long while, Miss Lawford," said one of the ladies, smiling at Daphne's eager face.

It was exactly what the sexton had said, and Daphne made the same answer as she had given him.

"One never knows," she said.

"Ah, but we know. You are coming home to be married in the autumn. We have heard all about it. Stratford Bells will ring a merry peal on that day, I should think; though I suppose the wedding will be at Arden Church. I am so glad you are going to settle in the neighbourhood, like your sister. What a grand place Goring Abbey is, to be sure! My sister and I drove over in a fly last summer to look at it. We went all over the house and grounds. It's a beautiful place. Yet I don't know but that I like Mr. Turchill's old manor-house best."

"So do I," answered Daphne absently.

"Of course you do!" cried the other sister, laughing. "That's only natural."

They all three went across the garden in the moonlight, and the elder sister unlocked the house-door.

"Would you like to go in alone?" she asked. "You are not afraid of ghosts?"

"Of Shakespeare's ghost? No, I should dearly love to see him. I would fall on my knees and worship the beautiful spirit."

"Go in, then. We'll wait in the garden."

Daphne went softly into the empty house. It was more ghostly than the church—more uncanny in its emptiness. She felt as if the disembodied souls of the dead were verily around and about her. That empty hearth, on which the moonbeams shone so coldly; those dusky walls; a vacant chair or two; a gleam of coloured light from an old scrap of stained glass. How cold it all felt in its dismal loneliness. She tried to conjure up a vision of the poet's home three hundred years ago—its old-world simplicity, its homely comfort and repose; a world before steam-engines, and gas, and electricity; a world in which printing and gunpowder were almost new. To

think of it was like going back to the childhood of this earth.

Daphne left the outer door ajar, and crept softly through the rooms, half-expectant of ghostly company. What tricks moonbeam and shadow played upon the walls, upon the solid old timber crossbeams, where in the unregenerate days, a quarter of a century ago, pilgrims used to pencil their miserable names upon the wood or white-wash, childishly fancying they were securing to themselves a kind of immortality. Daphne stood by the window with her heart beating feverishly, and her ear strained to catch the footfall of the sisters in the garden, and thus to be sure of human company. She looked along the empty street, moon-lighted, peaceful; even the tavern over the way a place of seeming tranquillity, notable only by its glimmering window and red curtain. The silence and shadowiness of the house were beginning to frighten her in spite of her better reason, when a step came behind her—a firm light tread which her ear and heart knew too well. It seemed almost as if her heart stopped

beating at the sound of that footfall. She stood like a thing of marble, scarce breathing. The step had crossed the threshold of the outer room, and was drawing nearer, when an eager voice outside broke the spell:

"Is she there? Have you found her?"

It was Edgar's voice at the outer door.

"Yes. Where else should she be?" answered Gerald Goring.

"Well, my lady, I hope you are satisfied with the nice little dance you have led us," he said to Daphne, as coolly as if he had been talking to a refractory child.

"You need not have troubled yourself about me," she answered curtly. "I told Lina I was coming for a walk. How did Edgar know I was here?"

"Edgar knew nothing," answered Gerald, with a light laugh that was something too scornful for perfect friendship. "Edgar would as soon have looked for you at Guy's Cliff or Warwick Castle, or in the moon. I knew you were nothing if not Shakespearian; and when I heard you had

taken your boat I guessed you had gone to worship at your favourite shrine. We heard of you at the church, and hunted for you among the trees and tombs."

"And then we went back to the landing-stage, where you always stop, don't you know, when you go as far as Stratford, and finding you had not come back for your boat, I was almost in despair. But Gerald suggested Shakespeare's birthplace, and here we are."

It was Gerald, then, who had found her; it was Gerald whose quick sympathy, prompt to divine her thoughts, had told him where she would be. Her future husband, the man to whom she was bound, had guessed nothing, had no faculty for understanding her fancies, whims, and follies. How wide apart must she and he remain all their lives, though nominally one!

They all three went quietly back to the garden, where the sisters were waiting, amused at Daphne's folly, and thinking it quite the most charming thing in girlhood; for to these vestals Shakespeare was a religion.

"I am really very sorry to have caused you so much trouble," said Daphne, apologising in a general way; "but I had no idea my absence would give anyone concern. Perhaps I have been longer than I intended to be."

"It struck ten a quarter of an hour ago," said Edgar.

"That's really dreadful; I had no idea it was so late."

Daphne bade the sisters good-bye, apologising humbly for her nocturnal visit. They went to the garden-gate with her, and stood there watching the light slim figure till it vanished in the moonlight, full of interest in her prettiness and her fancies.

"Is it not a sweet face?" asked one.

"And was it not a sweet idea to come and bid good-bye to this house before she went abroad?" said the other.

Daphne and her companions walked down to the landing-stage, talking very little by the way. Edgar and his betrothed side by side, Gerald walking apart with a cigar.

Daphne wanted to row, but Edgar insisted on establishing her in the stern, wrapped in a shawl which he found in the boat. He took the sculls, and Gerald reclined in the bows, smoking and looking up at the night sky.

It was a lovely night, all the landscape sublimated by that glory of moonbeam and shadow into something better and more beautiful than its daylight simplicity; every little creek and curve of the river a glimpse of fairyland; all things so radiantly and mysteriously lovely that Daphne almost hoped to see the river-god and his attendant nymphs disporting themselves in some reedy shallow.

"On such a night as this one would expect to see the old Greek gods come back to earth. I can't help feeling sorry sometimes, like Alfred de Musset, that they are all dead and gone," she said, looking with dreamy eyes down the moonlit tide across which the shadows of the willows fell so darkly.

"I think, considering the general tenor of their conduct, every proper-minded young lady

ought to feel very glad we have got rid of them," said Gerald, throwing away the end of his cigar, which fizzed and sparkled and made a little red spot in the moonlit water, a light that was of the earth earthy amidst all that heavenly radiance. "How would you like to be run away with by a wicked old man disguised as a bull; or to have the earth open as you were gathering daffodils, and a still wickeder old gentleman leap out of his chariot to carry you off to Tartarus?"

"How dare you call Zeus old?" cried Daphne indignantly. "The gods were for ever young."

"Well, he was a family man at any rate, and ought to have known better than to go masquerading about the plains and valleys when he ought to have been sitting in state on Olympus," answered Gerald. "Now such a river on such a night as this puts me in mind of old German legends rather than of Greek gods and goddesses. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Miss Daphne Lawford were suddenly to develop into an Undine, and take a

header into the river, cleaving the silvery tide, and going down to depths beyond any earthly fathom-line, leaving Turchill and me aghast in the boat."

"I have often envied Undine," answered Daphne; "I love the river so dearly that years ago I used really to fancy that there must be a bright world underneath it, where there are gnomes and fairies, and where one might be happy for ever. Even now, though I have left off believing in fairies, I cannot help thinking that there is profound peace at the bottom of this quiet river."

"If you were to go down experimentally in a diving-bell, I'm afraid you'd find only profound mud," said Gerald, with his cynical laugh.

Since his return from Canada he had treated Daphne much in the old fashion—as if she were a child upon whose foolishness his wisdom looked down from an ineffable height. There was nothing in manner, word, or look to show that he remem-

bered that one fatal moment of self-betrayal, when his passionate heart gave up its secret.

"I wonder what Daphne will think of this turbid Avon after she has seen Lake Leman," he speculated presently, "eh, Turchill?"

"The lake is a great deal wider," said Edgar, with his matter-of-fact air; "and those capital steamers are a great attraction."

"A lake with steamers upon it! Too horrible!" cried Daphne. "I shall not like it half so well as my romantic Avon, though its waters are sometimes 'drumly.' Dear old Avon!"—they were at the boathouse by this time, and she was stepping on shore as she spoke—"how long before I shall see you again?"

"Less than three months," said Edgar, clasping her hand as she sprang up the steps which Bink had cut in the meadow-bank. "Not quite three months; and then, darling," in a lower tone, "you will be all my own, and I shall be the happiest man on earth."

"Who knows?" returned Daphne. "How can one be sure when one is leaving a place that

one will ever come back to it? Good-bye, dear old river!" she cried, turning to look back at it with eyes full of tears. "I feel as sad as if I were taking my last look at you."

CHAPTER III.

"BUT I WOT BEST WHER WRINGETH ME MY SHO."

TWENTY-FOUR hours after that quiet row up the moonlit river, the South Hill party were on the Calais steamer, tossing and tumbling about in the Channel, much to the discomfiture of Mrs. Mowser, who was a bad sailor, and took care to make everybody in the ladies' cabin perfectly familiar with that fact. There was nothing of the Spartan about Mowser, nothing in any wise heroic in her conduct under the trial of sea-sickness. Yet there was a kind of martyrlike fidelity in her; for even in her agony she never let her mistress's travelling-bag and jewel-box out of her eye—nay, would hardly trust those valuables out of her own grasp,

clutching at them convulsively in the throes of her malady, and suspecting evil intentions in guileless fellow-sufferers.

It was a lovely night, and Madoline and Daphne both stayed on deck, to the indignation of Mowser, who was sure Miss Lawford would catch cold, and declared it was all Miss Daphne's doing.

"I thought you'd have come down to the cabin and had a comfortable lay-down," said Mowser when they had all scrambled or staggered up the oozy steps, and had been interrogated as to their names by an alert official, in a manner somewhat alarming to the sleepy and feeble-minded voyager.

Then came a weary hour or so in the warm light refreshment-room, a cup of coffee, or a *bouillon*, a few stifled yawns, an occasional excursion to the platform, and finally the welcome departure, by flat fields and unknown marsh-lands, with the inevitable row of poplars against the horizon. Daphne seemed to know the depressing landscape by heart. Her father, muffled in his corner, slept peacefully. Madoline slumbered, or seemed to slumber. Gerald and Edgar had secured a *coupé*

to smoke in; and by a judicious arrangement with the guard Sir Vernon and his daughters had a compartment all to themselves. But not one wink of sleep visited Daphne's eyelids. Wearily she watched the monotonous landscape, enlivened a little now and then by a glimpse of village life in the clear cold light of early morning; cattle moving about in misty meadows, casements opening to the balmy air. What a long journey it seemed to that one wakeful passenger! but the longest—were it even a long unprofitable, uneventful life-journey—must end at last; and by-and-by there came the cry of "Paris!" and the mandate that all passengers were to pass into the great bare luggage repository to answer for the contents of bags and baggage; a weary interval, during which the South Hill party loitered in bleak waiting-rooms, while Jinman and Mrs. Mowser delivered up keys, and satisfied the requirements of the State.

A long day in Paris, during which Sir Vernon reposed from his fatigues at the Bristol Hotel, while the young people went about sight-seeing; a dinner at Bignon's, where Daphne protested she

could perceive no difference between the much-vaunted *consommé* of that establishment and Mrs. Spicer's clear soup; an evening at the Français, where they saw Got in Mercadet; and then off again in the early summer morning by the eight-o'clock train for Dijon and Geneva, a twelve hours' journey.

It was a peerless morning. Paris, with its busy markets and teeming life, seemed brimming over with brightness and gaiety; boulevard-building in full progress; waggons coming in from the country; artisans hurrying, grisettes tripping to their work. Daphne's spirits rose with the thought of fresh woods and pastures new.

"I have been longing all my life to see Switzerland," she said, when all the difficulties of departure were overcome, and the train was speeding gaily past suburban gardens, and groves, and bridges, "and now I can hardly believe I am going there. It is a journey to dream about and look forward to, not to come to pass."

"Are no bright things ever to come to pass? Is all life to be dull and colourless?" asked Gerald

Goring, sitting opposite her in the railway carriage, with Lina by his side. They were all together to-day, having established themselves as comfortably as possible in the spacious compartment, and having provided themselves largely with light literature, wherewith to beguile the tedium of the journey.

"I don't know about you," said Daphne; "you are an exceptional person, and have been able to realise all your dreams!"

"Not all," answered Gerald gravely: "I suppose no one ever does that."

"You have but to form a wish, and, lo! it is gratified," murmured Daphne, taking no notice of his interruption. "Last winter it flashed across your brain that it would be nice to shoot cariboos—poor innocent harmless cariboos, who had never injured you—and, in a thought, you are off and away by seas and rivers and snow and ice to gratify the whim. What pleasure can Switzerland have for you? Every inch of it must be as vapidly familiar as that dear old English Warwickshire which you esteem so lightly."

"Perhaps; but it is a pleasure to revisit a familiar place with those I love. I was a poor solitary waif when I went through Switzerland, from Geneva to Constance, from Lindau to Samaden, picking up my companions by the way, or travelling in Byronic solitude—though, by-the-way, I doubt if Byron ever was much alone. Judged by his poetry he may be a gloomy and solitary spirit; but judged by his life and letters he was a social soul."

"I like to think of him as gloomy and alone," said Daphne, with a determined air. "Please don't dispel all my illusions."

Edgar was sitting by her side, cutting up magazines and newspapers, watchful of her every look, thinking her every word delightful, ready to minister to her comfort or pleasure, but without much ability to entertain her with any conversational brightness—unless they two could have been alone, and could have talked of their future life at Hawksyard, the stables, the gardens, the horses they were to ride together next winter, when Daphne was to take the field, a heaven-born Diana. He was never tired of talking of that happy future,

so near, so near, and to which he looked forward with such fervent hope.

They were nearing Fontainebleau; already the forest showed dark on the horizon. Daphne, so vivacious hitherto, became curiously silent. She sat looking towards that distant line of wood, that smiling valley with its winding river. All her soul was in her eyes as she looked. Two years ago—almost day for day, two years—and her heart had awakened suddenly from its long sleep of childish innocence to feel and to suffer.

Gerald stole a look—guiltily as it were—at the too expressive face. Yes, she remembered. Her soul was full of sad and tender memories. He could read all her secrets in those lovely eyes, the lips slightly parted, the lace about her neck stirred faintly by the throbbing of her heart. She had no more forgotten Fontainebleau and their meetings there than he had. To each it dated a crisis in life: for each it had given a new colour to every thought and feeling.

Lina, her hands moving slowly in some easy knitting, looked up at her sister.

"Are we not near Fontainebleau, where you spent your holidays once?" she asked.

"Yes," Daphne answered shortly.

"You speak as if you had not been happy there."

"I liked the place very much; but it was a dull life. Poor Miss Toby and her sick headaches, and Dibb for my only companion."

"And Dibb was ineffably stupid," said Gerald, suddenly forgetting himself, and moved to laughter at the thought of honest Martha's stolidity; "at least, I have often heard you say as much," he added hastily.

"She was a good harmless thing, and I won't have her ridiculed," said Daphne, brightening, all serious thoughts taking flight at the absurdity of Gerald's lapse. "I wonder if she has finished that crochet counterpane."

"Finished it! Of course not," cried Gerald. "She is the sort of girl who would die, and come to life again in a better world still working at the same counterpane—as I imagine from your description of her," he concluded meekly.

They were leaving Fontainebleau far behind them by this time; its old church, and its palace, with all its historic memories of Francis and Henri, Napoleon and Pius VII. The forest was but a dark spot in the vanishing distance; they were speeding away to the rich wine country with its vast green plains, and steep hill-sides clothed with vines. At two o'clock they were at Dijon, and seemed to have been travelling a week. Sir Vernon grumbled at the dust and heat, and regretted that he had undertaken the whole journey in a day.

"We ought to have stayed the night at Dijon," he said fretfully, when they were out of the station, steaming away towards Macon, after a hurried luncheon in the well-furnished refreshment-room.

"It is a wretchedly dull place to stop at, sir," said Gerald; "hardly anything to see."

"At my age a man does not want always to be seeing things," growled Sir Vernon; "he wants rest."

The day had been oppressively hot—a sultry

heat, a sun-baked landscape. Madoline and her sister bore it with admirable patience, beguiling the tedium of those long hours now with conversation, now with books, anon with quiet contemplation of the landscape, which for a long way offered no striking features. It was growing towards evening when they entered the Jura region, and found themselves in a world that was really worth looking at: a wild strange world, as it appeared to Daphne's eye: vast rolling masses of hill that seemed to have been thrown up in long waves before this little world assumed shape and solidity; precipitous green slopes, grassy walls that shut out the day, and the deep rapid river cleaving its tumultuous course through the trough of the hills.

"Don't you think this is better than Stratford-upon-Avon?" asked Gerald mockingly, as he watched Daphne's excited face, her eyes wide with wonder.

"Ever so much wilder and grander. I should like to live here."

"Why?"

"Because in such a world one would forget oneself. One's own poor little troubles would seem too mean and trumpery to be thought about."

"No man's trouble is small or mean to the sufferer himself," replied Gerald. "There is nothing grand or dignified in the abstract notion of Job's boils; yet to him they meant an unendurable agony which tempted him to curse his Creator and destroy his own life. I don't believe the grandest natural surroundings would lessen one's sense of the thorn in one's side."

"I don't think you have any thorns, Daphne," said Edgar tenderly, "or that you need take refuge from your sorrows among these desolate-looking mountains."

"Of course not. I was only speaking generally," answered Daphne lightly; "but oh! what a mighty world it is—hills that climb to the sky, and such lovely tranquil valleys lying between those dark earth walls. Vines, and water-mills, and water-falls tumbling over rocky beds. If Switzerland is much grander than this, I think its grandeur will

kill me. I can hardly breathe when I look up at those great dark hills."

"I don't know that there is anything in Switzerland that impresses one so much as one's first view of the Jura," said Gerald. "It is the giant gateway of mountain-land—the entrance into a new world."

The heat seemed to increase rather than diminish with the shades of evening. No cool breeze sprang up with the going down of the sun. The sultry atmosphere thickened, and became almost stifling; and then, just as it was growing dark, big raindrops came splashing down; a roar of thunder rolled along the hills, like a volley of cannon; thin threads of vivid light trembled and zigzagged behind the hill-tops, and the storm which had been brooding over them all the afternoon broke in real earnest.

"A thunderstorm in the Jura," exclaimed Gerald; "what a lucky young woman you are, Mistress Daphne! Here is one of Nature's grandest effects got up as if on purpose to give you pleasure."

"I hope it may cool the air," said Sir Vernon, from the comfortable corner where he had been

fitfully slumbering ever since they left the French territory.

Daphne sat looking out of the window, and spoke never a word. She was drinking in the beauty and grandeur of this unspeakable region, trying to fill her soul with the form and manner of it. Yes, it was worth while living, were it only to see these mountain peaks and gorges; these hurrying waters and leaping torrents; these living forces of everlasting Nature. She had been weary of her life very often of late, so weary that she would gladly have flung it off her like a worn-out garment, and have lain down in dull contentment to take her last earthly rest; but to-night she was glad to be alive—to see the forked lightnings dancing upon the mountain-sides; to hear all earth shudder at the roar of the thunder; to feel herself a part of that grand conflict. A little later, when they had gone through an almost endless tunnel, and were nearing Geneva, the thunder grew more and more distant, seemed to travel slowly away, like an enemy's cannon firing stray shots as the foe retreated; and the night

sky flung off its black cloud-mantle, and all the stars shone out of a calm purple heaven; while the little lights of the city, faint yellow spots upon the dark blue night, trembled and quivered in the distance.

"Isn't this dreadfully like one's idea of Manchester?" said Daphne when they were in the station, and tickets were being collected in the usual businesslike way.

"Can there be a higher model than Manchester for any commercial city?" asked Gerald.

"Commercial! Oh, I hope there is nothing commercial in Switzerland. I have always thought of it as a land of mountains and lakes."

"So is Scotland, yet there is such an element as trade in that country."

"You are bent on destroying my illusions. Oh, what a horrid row of omnibuses!" cried Daphne, as they came out of the station and confronted about twenty of those vehicles, with doors hospitably open, and commissionaires eager to abduct new arrivals for their several hotels. "And

where is Mont Blanc?" she inquired, looking up at the surrounding chimney-pots.

"At your elbow," answered Gerald; "but you may not see him to-night. The monarch of mountains is like our own gracious sovereign, and is not always visible to his subjects."

There was a private carriage from the Beau Rivage Hotel waiting for the South Hill party, and in this they all drove down a hilly street, which was bright and clean, and wide, and prosperous-looking, but cruelly disappointing to Daphne. Jinman and Mowser followed in the omnibus with the luggage. Mowser, like Daphne, was considerably disappointed.

"If this is Switzerland, I call it very inferior to Brighton," she said snappishly. "Where are the glaziers and the mountings?"

"Did you expect to find them just outside the station?" demanded the more travelled Jinman. "I have lived months in Switzerland and never seen a glashyeer. I don't hold with having one's bones rattled to bits upon a mule for the sake

of seeing a lot of dirty ice. One can look at that any hard winter on the Serpentine."

"Swisserland is Swisserland," answered Mowser sententiously, "and I don't hold with travelling all this way from home—I'm sure I thought this blessed day would never come to an end—unless we are to see somethink out of the common."

"The hotels are first-class," said Jinman, "and so are the restorongs on board the boats. Nobody need starve in Switzerland."

"Can we get a decent cup of tea?" asked Mowser. "There's not a scullery-maid at South Hill as would drink such cat-lap as they brought me at the Bristol."

Jinman explained that the teapot was an institution fully understood in the Helvetian States.

"They're a more domestic people than the French," said Jinman condescendingly, "I must say that for them. But Genever is the poorest place for restorongs I was ever at; plenty of your caffy-staminies, where you may drink bad wine and

smoke bad cigars to your heart's content; but hardly a decent house where you can get a dejoonay à la fourchette, or give a little bit of dinner to a friend. The hotels have got it all their own way."

"They ought to," answered Mowser, "when there's such a many of 'em. I wonder they can all pay."

At the Beau Rivage, Sir Vernon and his daughters found a spacious suite of rooms on the third floor, many-windowed, balconied, looking over the lake. The two young men had secured quarters a little way off at the International. Sir Vernon grumbled at being put on the third storey, after having given due notice of his coming; but the American dollar and the Russian rouble had bought up the first and second stages of the big hotel, and an English country gentleman must needs be contented with an upper floor. But the rooms were lovely, and Daphne was delighted with their altitude.

"We are all the nearer Mont Blanc," she said, standing half in and half out of the window; "one

of the waiters told me it was over there—*tout près*—but though I have been straining my eyes ever since, I can't discover a gleam of snow behind those dark hills."

There were the loveliest flowers on the tables and cabinets, such flowers as one hardly expects to find at an hotel, were it never so luxurious. Madoline admired them wonderingly.

"One would think the people here knew my particular vanity, and were anxious to gratify me," she said; and then turning to one of the waiters who was arranging books and writing-desks on the tables, she asked: "Have you always such lovely flowers in the rooms?"

"No, madame. They were ordered this morning by a telegram from Paris."

"Father! No, Gerald; it must have been your doing."

"A happy thought while I was loitering about that miserable railway-station," replied Gerald.

"How good of you! Dear flowers. They make the place seem like home."

"When you are settled at Montreux we can

arrange for the contents of the Abbey hot-houses to be sent you weekly. It will be something for that pampered menial MacCloskie to look after, in the intervals of his cigars and metaphysical studies. I have an idea that he employs all his leisure in reading Dugald Stewart. There is a hardness about him which I can only attribute to a close study of abstract truth."

Daphne was standing out in the balcony, with Edgar at her side, looking down at the scene below. Geneva seemed pretty enough in this night view—a city of lake and lamplight, ringed round with mountains; a city of angles and bridges, sharp lines, lofty houses, peaked roofs; the dark bulk of a cathedral, with a picturesque lantern on the roof, dominating all the rest.

"I think if it would only lighten I could see Mont Blanc," said Daphne, with her eyes fixed upon that bit of sky to which the waiter had pointed when she questioned him about the mountain. "One good vivid flash would light it up beautifully."

"My dearest, how dangerous!" exclaimed Edgar;

"pray, come out of the balcony. You might be blinded."

"I'll risk that. It will not be the first time I have stared the lightning out of countenance."

A summer flash lit up the sky as she spoke. There was one wide quiver of pale blue light, but never a glimpse of snow-clad peak gleamed from the distance.

"How horrid!" exclaimed Daphne; "but that was a very poor flash. I'll wait for a better one."

She waited for half-a-dozen, in spite of Edgar's urgent efforts to lure her indoors, but the summer flashes showed her nothing but their own vivid light.

"If the electric light prove no better than that for all practical uses, I don't envy the inventor," she exclaimed with infinite disgust.

Dinner was served in the adjoining room, but Madoline and her sister begged to be excused from dining. They would take tea together in the drawing-room while the three gentlemen dined. Sir Vernon declared that he had no appetite, but he was willing to sit down, for the public good as

it were. After which protest he did ample justice to a *sole à la Normande*, and a *poulet à la Marengo*, to say nothing of such pretty tiny kickshaws as *gâteau St. Honoré* and ice-pudding.

For Madoline and Daphne a round table was spread with a snowy cloth, a pile of delicious rolls, unquestionable butter, and a glass dish of pale golden honey, excellent tea, and cream—a thoroughly Arcadian meal.

"Dearest, how brightly your eyes are sparkling," said Lina, with an admiring look at the young face opposite. "I can see you are enjoying yourself."

"Yes, there is always a pleasure in novelty. Why cannot one pass all one's life in new places? The world is wide enough. It is only our own foolishness that keeps us tied, like a poor tethered animal, to one dull spot."

"Why, Daphne, I thought you were so fond of home, that the banks of the Warwickshire Avon made up your idea of earthly paradise!"

"Sometimes, yes. But lately I have grown terribly tired of Warwickshire."

"That's a bad hearing; and next year, when you are settled at Hawksyard——"

"Please don't speak of that. Thank Heaven we are three days' journey from Hawksyard. Let me forget it if I can."

"Daphne, how can you talk like that of a dear old place which is to be your home—a place where one of the best men living was born?"

"If you think him such a wonder of goodness, why did you not have him when he asked you?" cried Daphne, in a sudden fit of irritation. Those nerves of hers, always too highly strung, were to-night at their sharpest tension. "I am sick to death of hearing him praised by people who don't care a straw about him."

"Daphne!" exclaimed Lina, more grieved than offended at this outburst.

Daphne was on her knees beside her sister in the next moment.

"Forgive me, darling, I am hideously cross and disagreeable. I suppose it is that tiresome lightning, and the annoyance of not seeing Mont Blanc. All that long, dusty, fusty journey, and

nothing but an hotel and a lamp-lit town at the end of it. I wanted to find myself in the very heart of mountains, and glaciers, and avalanches."

"I think you know how honestly I like Edgar," said Madoline, believing in her guilelessness that Daphne had resented her praise of Mr. Turchill because she fancied it hollow and insincere. "I daresay if I had not cared for Gerald long before Edgar proposed to me, I might have given Mr. Turchill a different answer. I cannot tell how that might have been. My life has had only one love. I loved Gerald from the days when he first came to South Hill, a schoolboy, when he used to tell me all his troubles and his triumphs, when any success of his made me prouder than if it had been my own. My heart was given away ages before Edgar ever spoke to me of love."

"I know, dear; I can understand it all; only, don't you know, when everybody conspires to praise the young man to whom one is engaged, and when all one's relations are everlastingly congratulating one upon one's good fortune—the

implication being that it is quite undeserved—there is a kind of weariness that creeps over one's soul at the sound of those familiar phrases."

"I will never praise him again, dear," answered Lina, smiling at her. "I shall be perfectly contented to know that you value him as he deserves to be valued, and that your future happiness is assured by his devoted love."

Daphne gave a fretful little sigh, but made no further protest. She was thinking that she had seen a Newfoundland dog every whit as devoted as Edgar. Yet the affection of that Newfoundland would have hardly been deemed all-sufficient for the happiness of a lifetime.

She went back to the table, and did execution upon the rolls and honey with a healthy girlish appetite, despite that feverish unrest which disturbed the equal balance of her mind.

Daphne ordered Edgar to attend her on an exploration of the city next morning, directly after breakfas

"Madoline and my father know the place by heart," she said; "and, of course, Mr. Goring is

tired of it. How could a man who is weary of all creation care for Geneva?"

"Who told you I was weary of creation?" asked Gerald languidly.

"Your ways and your manners," replied Daphne. "I knew as much the first time I saw you."

The weather was clear and bright, the town looking its best, as Daphne and her lover left the hotel on their excursion. They were to be back before noon, at which hour they were to start with Gerald and Madoline for Ferney.

"If it were not for the lake this place would be beneath contempt," said Daphne decisively, as they crossed the low level bridge, and lingered to look at the sapphire Rhine, and to speculate upon that deepened azure hue which the waters assume when they flow from the lake into the river. "It is no more like the Geneva of my dreams than it is like Jerusalem the Golden."

"Is it not really?"

"Of course not. My idea of Switzerland was a succession of mountain ledges, varied by an

occasional plank across a torrent. Imagine my revulsion of feeling at finding a big businesslike town, with omnibuses, and cafés, and manufactories, and everything that is common-place and despicable."

"But, surely, I think you must have known that Geneva was a town," faltered Edgar, grieved at his dear one's ignorance, and glad to think his mother was not by to compare this foolishness with her own precise geographical knowledge, acquired thirty years ago at Miss Tompion's, and carefully harvested in the store-house of a methodical mind.

"Well, perhaps I may have expected something in the way of a city; a semi-circle of white peaky houses on the margin of the lake; a mediæval watch-tower or two; a Gothic gateway, the very gate that was shut against Rousseau, don't you know; and Mont Blanc in full view."

"I call it a very fine town," said Edgar, venturing to disagree with his beloved.

"I wish it did not swarm so with English and

Americans. I have heard nothing but my own tongue since I came out," protested Daphne.

She was better pleased presently when they mounted a narrow street on the side of a break-neck hill. She was tolerably satisfied with the cathedral, where the tomb of the great Protestant leader Henri de Rohan took her fancy by its massive grandeur, couchant lions at its base, the soldier in his armour above. She was interested in the pulpit from which Calvin and Theodore de Bèze preached the Reformed Faith, and was somewhat disgusted with her companion for his utter ignorance of the historic past, save inasmuch as it was feebly reflected in the most limited and conventional course of instruction.

"What did you learn at Rugby?" she asked impatiently. "You don't seem to know anything."

"We didn't give much time to history, except Livy and Xenophon," answered Edgar, feebly apologetic.

"And therefore you are not a bit of use as a cicerone. You really ought to subscribe to Mudie and read a lot of instructive books. There's no

good in reading old histories; people are always discovering letters and archives that put the whole story of the past in a new light. You must get your history hot from the press."

"I would rather take my information at second-hand from you, dear," answered Edgar meekly. "It seems natural to women to read a great deal, and to find almost a second life in books, but men——"

"Are so shamefully lazy that their capacity for taking in knowledge is exhausted by the time they have skimmed the daily papers," answered Daphne. "And now, please, take me to the museums Mr. Goring told you about."

With some trouble, and a good deal of inquiring, they found a private collection of art and *bric-à-brac*, historical relics, furniture, delf, and china, that was well worth seeing. Then, having regaled their eyes upon this to the uttermost, they scampered off to the public museum, where the only objects of thrilling interest were the manuscripts and letters of dead and gone celebrities, from Calvin downwards. They found that

famous reformer's penmanship as angular as his character; they found Bossuet a careless and sprawling writer; Fénelon careful, neat, and fine; the Duc de Richelieu a fop even in the use of his pen, his writing exquisitely clear, minute, and regular; while De Maintenon's hand was large, bold, angular, and eminently readable—the natural indication of an unscrupulous managing temper, a woman born to govern, by fair means or foul. Daphne lingered a little over Rousseau's manuscript of "Julie," a work of delicate neatness, evidently copied from the rough draft.

"Is not 'Julie' one of the novels which one mustn't read?" asked Daphne, when she had perused half a page. "It looks uncommonly dull. I thought wicked stories were always interesting."

Edgar had never heard of Julie. It was doubtful if he had ever heard of Rousseau; but at this remark he hurried Daphne away from the manuscript, lest some snaky little bit of immorality should uncurl itself on the page, and lift up its evil head before her. It was time for them to

get back to the hotel, so they gave but a cursory glance at the pictures and other treasures of the museum, and hastened into the glare of the broad white street, where Edgar insisted upon putting his betrothed into a fly. They found Madoline and Gerald waiting for them in the porch of the Beau Rivage, and a smart open carriage with a pair of horses ready to take them to Ferney.

"Thank goodness we are going away from Geneva," said Daphne, as the carriage rattled through the wide clean streets towards the country; "and now I suppose we shall see something really Swiss."

"You will see the home of a great man of letters," answered Gerald, looking at her lazily with those languid dreamy eyes whose shifting hue had so puzzled her in the forest of Fontainebleau, "and as you are such a hero-worshipper, that ought to satisfy you."

"I don't care a straw for Voltaire," said Daphne.

"Indeed! And pray how much do you know about him?"

"Everything. I have read Carlyle's description of him in Frederick the Great. He was a horrid man; cringed to his goat-faced eminence Dubois; allowed himself to be caned by the Duc de Rohan's hired bravoes, the Duc looking on out of a hackney coach window all the time."

"Don't say allowed himself. I don't suppose he could help it."

"He ought to have prevented it. Imagine a great man beginning his career by being beaten in the public streets."

"Who knows that your Shakespeare did not get a sound drubbing from Sir Thomas Lucy's gamekeepers, before he was stung into retaliating by that exquisitely refined lampoon which tradition ascribes to him. You worship your Swan of Avon for what he wrote, not for what he did. Can you not deal the same measure to Voltaire?"

"I don't know anything of his writing, except a few speeches out of 'Zaïre,' and an epitome of his 'Louis Quatorze.' If you are going to put him on an equality with Shakespeare——"

"I am not. But I say that as an all-round

literary worker he never had an equal, unless it were Scott, who has surpassed him in many things, and who could, I believe, have equalled him on any ground."

"Scott was an old dear," answered Daphne, with her usual flippancy, "and I would rather have 'Kenilworth' and 'The Bride of Lammermoor' than all this Voltaire of yours ever wrote."

"And which you, most conscientious of critics, never read."

"Well, Daphne, what do you think of the country?" asked Madoline, now that they had left the city and were driving slowly up hill through a pastoral district. "Is it not pretty?"

"Pretty," cried Daphne, "of course it is pretty; but it isn't Swiss. What do I care for prettiness? There is enough of that and to spare in Warwickshire. Why," with ineffable disgust, "the country is absolutely green!"

"What colour did you expect it to be?" asked Edgar, smiling at her energetic displeasure.

"White, of course! One dazzling sweep of snow. One blinding world of whiteness."

"If you want that kind of thing you had better go to the North Pole," said Gerald.

"Not I. If this is Switzerland I have done with travelling. I daresay the North Pole is as tame as Stratford High Street."

"Does not that grand Jura range frowning yonder content you?" asked Gerald. "Is not your eye satisfied by the cloud-wrapped Alps on the other side of that blue lake?"

"No; they are too far off. I want to be among them—a part of them. After a hypocritical waiter telling me last night that Mont Blanc was *là, tout près*, a truthful chambermaid confessed this morning that it is a fourteen hours' drive to Chamounix, and then one is only at the foot of the mountain. As for this landscape we are now travelling through——"

"It is uncommonly like Jersey," said Edgar. "I took my mother there for her holiday five summers ago. It is a capital place for boating and rambling about, and crossing over to the other islands; but the mater didn't like it. The people weren't genteel enough for her. The gowns and bonnets weren't up to her mark."

They were at Ferney by this time, a rustic village with one or two humble cafés, a few small shops, a farm-yard. Here Daphne descried a pair of oxen drawing a waggon of hay—noble beasts, dappled and tawny—and the sight of these gave a foreign air to the scene which in some wise lessened her disgust.

A shaded shrubberied drive admitted them to the house where Voltaire lived so long and so peacefully, and which is now in the occupation of a gentleman who graciously allows it to be shown—rather ungraciously—by his major-domo. Lightly as Daphne had spoken of Voltaire, she was too keenly imaginative not to be interested in the house which any famous man had inhabited. Two quiet rooms, *salon* and bed-chamber, looked into a short broad alley of trees, a garden, and summer-house perched high on the hill-side, and commanding a wide prospect of fertile valley and gloomy mountain. All things in those two rooms were exactly as they had been in the great man's lifetime; everything was exquisitely neat, and all the colours had faded to those delicate half-tints which the artistic soul

loveth: faint grays and purples, fainter greens and fawn colours. Here was the narrow bed on which Voltaire slept, with its embroidered coverlet; chairs and *fauteuils* covered with tapestry; walls upholstered with figured satin damask, pale with age; Lekain's portrait over the bed; Madame du Châtelet's opposite, where the great satirist's cynical glance must have rested on it as he awakened from his slumbers.

They all looked reverently at these things, hushed and subdued by the thought that they were amidst the surroundings of the dead; belongings that had once been familiar and precious to him who now slept the last long sleep in his vault at the Pantheon; where never-ending gangs of Cook's tourists are perpetually being ushered into his mausoleum, and perpetually asking one another who was Voltaire?

They loitered a little in the garden, wrote their names in a visitors'-book, and then went back to explore the village, and to take a modest luncheon of coffee and bread and butter, sour claret, and Gruyère cheese at one of the humble taverns, while

the horses stood at ease before the door, and the driver refreshed himself modestly at the expense of his fare.

They drove home to the hotel by a way which passed through a quaint village, and then skirted the lake, and which was somewhat more romantic than the country road by which they had come, and Daphne expressed herself satisfied, on the whole, with her first day in Switzerland.

CHAPTER IV.

"FORBID A LOVE AND IT IS TEN TIMES SO WODE."

SIR VERNON showed himself especially gracious to his younger daughter and her lover next morning at breakfast, when the itinerary of their holiday was discussed. So far as his own pleasure was concerned, he would have liked nothing better than to go straight to Montreux, where a delightful villa, with a garden sloping to the lake, had been secured for his accommodation; but he did not forget that Daphne had seen nothing of Switzerland, and Edgar very little; and for their sakes he was ready to make considerable sacrifices.

"I am a wretched traveller, and I detest sightseeing," he said languidly; "but I don't wish to

spoil other people's pleasure. Suppose we make a little round before we settle down in our villa by the lake? Let us go to Fribourg and hear the organ, and then on to Berne for a day or so, and then to Interlaken. There I can rest quietly in my own rooms at the Jungfraublich, while you young people drive to Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, and do any little climbing in a mild way which is compatible with the safety of your necks and bones generally; and then we can come straight back to Montreux. How would you like that, Madoline?"

"Very much, indeed, dear father. It will be a delight to me to go over the old ground with Daphne."

"And you, Goring?"

"I am Lina's slave—her shadow; true as the dial to the sun."

"Papa," said Daphne, drawing her chair nearer to him, and with a coaxing look which no man but a father could have resisted, "it is so good of you to propose such a charming trip, and I shall enjoy it immensely; but would it be any way possible, now we are so near, to go to Chamounix, and get

to the top of Mont Blanc; or, at least, part of the way up?"

"No, my dear. Quite out of the question."

"But it is only a drive to Chamounix; and there is a diligence goes every morning."

"Edgar can take you there next year, when you are married. I am too old for a drive of fourteen hours' duration."

Daphne looked miserable. Mont Blanc was the central point of all her desires. It irked her to be so near and not to reach the world-famous mountain. She looked at Edgar doubtfully. No; she could not realise the idea of coming back next year, alone with him. She had never been able to project her mind into that future in which they two should be one, bound by a sacred yoke, doomed to be for ever together. From any casual glance at such a future her mind always shrank away shudderingly, as from the dim memory of a bad dream.

"I don't believe I shall ever come to Switzerland again," she said discontentedly, when break-

fast was finished and her father had retired to his own room to write letters.

Madoline was sitting at work by an open window, silken water-lilies and bulrushes developing themselves gradually under her skilful fingers, on a ground of sage-green cloth. The tables were covered with books and miniature stands; the room was bright with flowers, and looked almost as homelike as South Hill; but before the evening Mowser and Jinman would have packed all these things, and despatched the greater part of them to Montreux, while the travellers went on to Fribourg in light marching order, which in this case meant about three portmanteaux per head. Some books must, of course, be taken, and drawing materials, and fancy-work, and a writing-desk or two, and camp-stools for sitting about in romantic places, and a good deal more, which made a formidable array of luggage by-and-by when Sir Vernon and his family were assembled at the railway station.

"Do you mean to tell me that we require all these things for a week or ten days?" he said,

scowling at the patient Jinman, who was standing on guard over a compact pyramid of trunks, portmanteaux, and Gladstone bags, umbrellas, sunshades, and heterogeneous etceteras.

"I don't think there's anything could have been dispensed with, Sir Vernon," answered Jinman. "The books and ornaments and most of the heavy luggage have gone on to Montrooks."

"Great Heaven, in the face of this would any man marry, and make himself responsible for feminine existences!" exclaimed Sir Vernon, shrugging his shoulders disgustedly as he turned away; yet Jinman could have informed him that his own share of the luggage was quite equal to that of his daughters.

They were all established presently in a German railway compartment: Sir Vernon seated in his corner and absorbed in an English newspaper, whose ample sheet excluded every glimpse of lake and wooded slopes, Alps and Jura; while Edgar smoked on the platform outside, and Daphne stood at the open door, gazing at the changing landscape: the smiling lake below; the dark slopes

and mountain range on the farther shore; the villages nestling in the valley on this nearer bank, the cosy little homesteads and bright gardens; the vine-clad terraces, divided by low gray walls; the quaint old churches, with tiled roofs and square clock-towers; and yonder, far away at the end of the lake, Chillon's gloomy fortress, which she recognised with a cry of delight, having seen its presentment in engravings and photographs, and knowing Byron's poem by heart.

She gave a sigh of regret as a curve of the line carried her away from the azure lake and its panorama of hills.

"I can hardly bear to leave it," she said; "but, thank Heaven, we are coming back to it soon."

"You are reconciled to Switzerland, then, in spite of your disillusions," said Gerald.

"Reconciled! I should like to live and die here."

"What! abandon your beloved Shakespeare's country?"

"I am heartily sick of Shakespeare's country."

"Daphne," cried Edgar, with a look of deepest

mortification, "that is a bad look-out for poor old Hawksyard."

"Hawksyard is a dear old place, but I don't want to be reminded of it—or of anything else in Warwickshire now I am in Switzerland. I want to soar, if I can. I am in Byron's country. He lived there," pointing downwards to where they had left Lausanne and Ouchy. "He wrote some of his loveliest poetry there; his genius is for ever associated with these scenes. Sad, unsatisfied spirit!"

Her eyes filled with sudden tears at the thought of that disappointed life, seeking solace from all that is loveliest in Nature, shunning the beaten tracks, yet never finding peace.

"If you are very good," said Gerald gravely, "within the next ten minutes I will show you something you are anxious to see."

"What is that?"

"Mont Blanc. Get your glass ready."

"Why, we left him behind us, across the lake, sulkily veiled in impenetrable cloud."

"He will show himself more amiable presently.

You will get a good view of him in five minutes if you focus your glass properly and don't chatter."

Daphne spoke never a word, but stood motionless, with her landscape glass glued to her eyes, and waited, as for a divine revelation.

Yes, yonder it arose, white and cloudlike on the edge of the blue summer sky, the mighty snow-clad range, of which Mont Blanc is but a detail—the grand inaccessible region; mountain-top beyond mountain-top; peak above peak; everlasting, untrodden hills, producing nothing, pasturing nothing, stupendous and ghastly as the polar seas; a world apart from all other worlds; a spectacle to awe the dullest soul and thrill the coldest heart; a revelation of Nature's Titanic beauty.

"Oh, it must have been such mountains as those that the Titans hurled about them when they fought with Zeus," cried Daphne, when she had gazed and gazed till the last gleam of those white crests vanished in the distance.

"Do you feel better?" asked Gerald, with his mocking smile.

"I feel as if I had seen the world that we are to know after death," answered Daphne.

"Would you be surprised to hear that these excrescences, which you think so grand, are but modern incidents in the history of the earth? Time was when Switzerland was one vast ice-field: nay, if we can believe Lyell, the clay of London was in course of accumulation as marine mud at a time when the ocean still rolled its waves over the space now occupied by some of the loftiest Alpine summits."

"Please don't be instructive," exclaimed Daphne. "I want to know nothing about them, except that they are there, and that they are beautiful."

At Fribourg they drove down the narrow street to the Zähringer Hof, the hotel by the suspension bridge, where from a balcony they looked down a sheer descent to the river, and to the roofs and chimneys of the old town lying in a cleft of the hills, while yonder, suspended in mid-air, a mere spider-thread across the sky, stretched the upper and loftier bridge. It was nearly dinner

time when they arrived. There were dark clouds on the horizon, and only gleams of watery sunshine behind the gray old watch-towers on the crest of the hill across the river.

"I'm afraid we are going to have another storm," said Gerald, lounging against the embrasure of a window, and looking as if Fribourg, with its modern suspension bridges and mediæval watch-towers, were just the most uninteresting place in the world.

He looked thoroughly worn out and weary, as if he had been labouring hard with body and mind all day, instead of lolling in a railway-carriage, staring listlessly at the landscape. Sir Vernon, the ostensible invalid, was not more languid.

"Let it come down," cried Daphne; "but whatever the weather may be, I shall go and hear the organ after dinner. There is the bell for vespers. How nice it is to find oneself in a Roman Catholic town, with vesper-bells ringing, and dear old priests and nuns and all sorts of picturesque creatures walking about the streets!"

They dined in their own sitting-room, Sir Vernon having a good old English dislike to any intercourse with unintroduced fellow-creatures. To sit at a *table-d'hôte* with the Tom, Dick, and Harry of cockney Switzerland would have been abhorrent to him.

"We may get a worse dinner in our own room," he said, looking doubtfully at some unknown spoon-food offered to him by way of an *entrée*, "but we avoid rubbing shoulders with the kind of people who travel nowadays."

"Are they so much worse than the people who used to travel——"

"When I was a young man? Yes, Daphne, quite a different race," said Sir Vernon with authority. "Gerald was right. We are in for another storm."

A quiver of livid light, a crash of thunder, and black darkness yonder behind the hills gave emphasis to his statement. Daphne flew to the window to look at the bridges and the towers, which were almost expunged from the face of creation by a thick blinding rain. A waggon was

crawling across the nearer and lower bridge, and the whole fabric rocked under its weight.

"Nobody will dream of going to the cathedral to-night," said Sir Vernon.

But the waiter in attendance declared that everyone would go. There would be a concert on the great organ from eight to nine. The cathedral was close by; there would be a carriage in waiting at ten minutes to eight to convey those guests who graciously deigned to patronise the concert, for which the waiter was privileged to dispose of tickets. Furthermore, the storm would assuredly abate before long. It was but a thunder-shower.

Daphne stood at the window watching the thunder-shower, which seemed to be drowning the lower town and flooding the river. The rain came down in torrents; the thunder roared and bellowed over the hills; the chainwork of the suspension bridge creaked and groaned.

Sir Vernon protested that the storm made him nervous, and retired to his room, leaving the young people to do as they pleased.

They sat in the stormy dusk sipping their coffee, ready to put on their hats and be off the minute the carriage was announced. Daphne wore a gown of some creamy-white material, which gave her a ghostly look in the gloom.

"You have heard this famous organ, Lina," she said. "Is it really worth stopping at Fribourg on purpose to hear it, when, with a little more time and trouble, one might get halfway up Mont Blanc?"

"It is a wonderful organ; but you will be able to judge for yourself in a few minutes."

"We should have been getting near Chamounix by this time, if we had started by this morning's diligence," sighed Daphne.

"Restless, unsatisfied soul! still harping on the mountain," said Gerald.

"I have seen him, at least," exclaimed Daphne, clasping her hands; "that is something. Far, far away, like a glimpse of another world: but still I have seen him. Shall we see him again to-morrow, do you think, on the way to Interlaken?"

"I'm afraid not. To-morrow I shall have the honour to introduce you to the Jungfrau."

"I don't care a straw for her," exclaimed Daphne contemptuously.

"What, not for Manfred's mountain? Can you, who have so devoured your Byron, be indifferent to the background of that gloomy individual's existence?"

"There is an interest in that, certainly; but Mont Blanc is my beau-ideal of a mountain."

Here the carriage was announced. The two girls put on their hats and wraps, soft China crape and gray camel's-hair shawls, and hurried down to the hall. The rain was still falling, the thunder still grumbling amidst distant hills. They crowded into the fly, and were jolted over stony and uneven ways to the cathedral.

They went in at a narrow little door to a great dark church, with solitary lamps dotted about here and there in the gloom. Everything had a mysterious look; the richly-carved oak, the shrines, the chapels, the shrouded altar far away at the end.

There were, perhaps, a hundred people sitting about in high narrow pews with massive carved oak seats, sitting here and there in a scattered way, all wrapped in shadow and gloom, silent, overawed, expectant.

Madoline and Daphne walked side by side up the long nave, between two lines of oaken seats, the two men following; then midway between the organ and the altar, they went into one of the pews—Lina first, then Daphne. She had been sitting there a minute or so looking about the dim dark church before she discovered that it was Gerald, and not Edgar, who sat by her side. Edgar had taken the seat behind them.

They sat there for five or ten minutes, hushed and listening; the rain splashing on the roof, the distant thunder reverberating; nothing to be seen in the vast building but those yellow lamps gleaming here and there, and patching with faint light an isolated statue, or a pulpit, or a clustered column.

At last, when the silence, broken only by faintest whisperings among the expectant audience,

had endured for what seemed a weary while, the organ pealed forth in a grand burst of sound, which swept along the arched roof, and filled the church with music. Then after that crash of mighty chords came tenderest phrases, a flowing melody that sank low as a whisper, and then that strain of almost supernatural likeness to the human voice rose up above the legato arpeggios of the accompaniment, and thrilled every ear—tender, angelic, a divine whisper of love and melancholy. Daphne had risen from her seat, and stood with her arms resting upon the massive woodwork in front of her, gazing up through the darkness towards that glimmering spot of light yonder, near the arch of the roof, which showed where the organ was, far away, mysterious.

Oh, that heavenly voice, with its soul-moving sadness! A rush of tears streamed from her eyes; she stretched out her hands unconsciously, as if yearning for some human touch to break the mournful spell of that divine sorrow, and the hand nearest Gerald was clasped in the darkness; clasped by a warm strong hand which held it and

kept it—kept it without a struggle, for, alas! it lay unresistingly in his. They drew a little nearer to each other involuntarily, shudderingly happy—with the deep sense of an unpardonable guilt, a shameful treason; yet forgetting everything except that vain foolish love against which both had fought long and valiantly.

A peal of thunder on the organ within, an answering peal from the storm without. The mimic tempest blended itself with heaven's own artillery; and at the terrible sound those guilty creatures in the church let go each other's hands. Daphne clasped hers before her face, and sank on her knees.

"Pity me and help me, O God!" she prayed, and looking up she saw just above her in a marble niche the image of the Mother of God; and in this moment of temptation and self-abandonment, it seemed to her a natural thing that women should ask a woman's mediation in their hour of sorrow.

A funeral hymn of Sebastian Bach's pealed from the organ with an awful grandeur which

thrilled every listener; and then came a silence, and after that the low murmur of the storm dying away in the distance, from the overture to "William Tell," the flutelike tones of the "*Ranz des Vaches*," telling of pastoral valleys and solemn mountains, a life of Arcadian innocence and peace.

With those lighter, gayer strains the concert ended, and they all went slowly and silently out of the church. The storm was over, and the moon was breaking through dark clouds.

"Don't let us go back in that jingling abomination of a fly," said Gerald, striding on over the wet pavement, leaving the two girls to follow with Edgar Turchill.

They picked their way through the streets. The town was all dark and quiet, save for a glimmering yellow candle here and there under a gable; there was none of the brightness and out-of-door life of a French town. A couple of omnibuses and a fly or two carried off the people who had been in the cathedral to their several hotels.

Gerald Goring was waiting for them in front of the Zähringer.

"What made you hurry on so?" asked Madoline wonderingly.

"Did I hurry? I think it was you others who crawled. That music irritated my nerves a little. It is full of studied effects; the organist has trained himself to play upon the emotions of his audience, now soaring to the seraph choir, now going down to the depths of Pandemonium. The thunderstorm and the organ together would have been too much for anybody. Oh, pray don't go indoors yet," he exclaimed, as they were all three moving towards the entrance of the hotel. "Let us go for a walk on the bridge. Don't you know that after the organ the great feature of Fribourg is the bridge?"

"If we are to be on our way to Interlaken to-morrow, we had better see all we can to-night," said the practical Edgar.

They went on the bridge; Gerald still walking ahead, and keeping in some wise aloof from them. Daphne had not spoken since they left the cathedral.

"Had the music an unpleasant effect upon you

too, dear, that you are so silent?" Madoline asked, as they two walked side by side.

"It was only too beautiful," answered Daphne.

"And you are glad we came here."

"No. Yes. I would rather have been half-way up Mont Blanc."

"Poor child! But that is a pleasure in reserve for another holiday. I know Edgar will take you wherever you like to go."

"Do you think so? What a dance I shall lead him!" cried Daphne with a mocking laugh. "I shall not be content with Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn. I shall insist upon seeing all the extinct volcanoes, the wonderful fiery mountains that have burned themselves out. Cotopaxi is about the mildest hill he will be invited to climb."

Mr. Turchill had dropped into the background, and was quietly enjoying his cigar, unaware of the pleasures in store for him. Gerald walked ever so far ahead, cigarless, a gloomy figure.

"I'm afraid either the thunder or the organ has given Gerald one of his nervous headaches," said Lina anxiously.

The moon showed herself fitfully athwart hurrying clouds, now lighting up hills and watch-towers, river and rugged ravine, with a wild Salvator-Rosa-esque effect, now hidden altogether, and leaving all in gloom. Midway upon the bridge Madoline and Daphne stopped, and stood looking down into the hollow below, where the quiet sleeping town was dimly visible, with its quaint street lamps, and rare gleams of light from narrow casements, and stony ways shining after the rain. Here, when they had stood for some minutes, Edgar joined them, having finished his cigar, and he and Madoline began to talk about the place; he questioning, she expounding its features.

While they two were talking, Gerald came slowly back, aud stood by Daphne's side, a few paces apart from the others. She said never a word. They stood side by side for some minutes like statues. She was wondering if he could hear the passionate throbbing of her heart, which would not be stilled.

They were standing thus, as if bound by a spell, when a heavy waggon came creeping slowly

along the bridge, making the spot on which they stood tremble and sway under their feet.

"We are hanging by a thread between time and eternity," said Gerald, drawing closer to her. "What if the thread were to snap, and drop us, hand in hand, into the black gulf of death?"

She did not shudder at the thought, but turned and looked at him in the moonlight, with a strange sad smile.

"Would you be glad?" he asked softly.

"Yes," she answered, between a sigh and a whisper, still looking up at him with that pathetic smile; and his eyes looked fondly down into hers, losing themselves in the depth of a fathomless mystery.

"Do you know that this bridge is the second longest in the world, three hundred yards long, and a hundred and sixty-eight feet above the river?" asked Edgar Turchill's matter-of-fact tones, as he walked towards them, cheerful, contented, pleased with himself and all the world.

"For God's sake spare us a gush of second-hand Baedeker," cried Gerald with intense irrita-

tion. "As if any living soul, except a Cook's tourist, could care how many feet or how many yards long a bridge is. It is the effect one values, the general idea that one is on that very bridge of Al Sirât, laid over the midst of hell, and finer than a hair, and sharper than the edge of a sword, over which the righteous must pass to Mahomet's paradise. It is the notion of man's audacity in making perilous ways that is really delightful. When that waggon went across just now, I thought the last straw was being laid, and we were all going."

Edgar came round to Daphne with a calm air of proprietorship which made her shudder.

"What an interesting evening we have had!" he said.

"Very."

"You look pale and tired. Has it all been too much for you?" he asked tenderly.

"I think that organ would be too much for anyone."

"Do you know—I am no judge, and you mustn't laugh at me for expressing an opinion—I hardly thought it equal, as an organ, to the one at

St. Paul's. I took my mother there once when all the charity children were assembled. I can't tell you what a grand sight it was, the dome crowded with their fresh young faces."

"Oh, for pity's sake don't talk about it," cried Daphne, almost hysterically. "To compare that dark solemn cathedral, with just a few people dotted about among the shadows, and the thunder pealing over the roof—to compare such a scene with that pagan St. Paul's, and the dome crowded with rosy-cheeked children, all white caps and pinafores and yellow worsted stockings!"

"I was talking of the organ," replied Edgar, somewhat offended.

"Then why introduce the charity children? Oh, please let my thoughts dwell upon that dark church to-night; let me remember the music, the darkness."

"Daphne, dearest one, you are crying," exclaimed Edgar, startled at the sound of a stifled sob.

"Who would not cry at such music?"

"But so long after. You are nervous and hysterical."

"I am only tired. Please don't worry me," retorted Daphne fretfully, wrapping herself tightly in her soft gray shawl and quickening her pace.

She said not a word more till they were inside the Zähringer Hof, when she wished the other three a brief good-night, declaring herself utterly worn out, and tripped lightly upstairs to her room on the second storey. Madoline's room was next her sister's, and when she went up a few minutes later, and knocked at the door of communication between the two rooms, Daphne excused herself from opening it.

"I'm dreadfully sleepy, dear," she said; "please leave me alone for to-night!"

"Willingly, dearest, if you are sure you are not ill."

"Not the least in the world."

"And there is nothing you want Mowser to do for you?"

"Nothing. She has unpacked my things. I have everything I want."

"Then good-night, and God bless you."

"Good-night," answered Daphne, but invoked

no blessing upon the sister she loved so well. Prayer breathed from such a guilty heart would be almost blasphemy.

She walked up and down the room for a long time, up and down, up and down, her soul filled with ineffable joy. Yes; guilty, treacherous, vile, ungrateful as she knew herself to be, she could not stifle that wild sense of happiness, the rapture of knowing herself beloved by the man she loved. Nothing but evil could ever come out of that love; nothing but struggle, and sorrow, and pain; yet it was deep delight to have been loved, the one perfect joy which was possible for her upon this earth. To have missed it would have been never to have lived: and now death might come when it would. She had lived her life; she had had her day.

That this love was a thing of guilt, a scorpion to be crushed and trodden under her foot, she never questioned. Not for an instant did it enter into her mind that she could profit by Gerald Goring's inconstancy, that she was to take to herself the lover whose faith had been violated by to-night's revelation. Never did it occur to

her that any alteration in his future or hers was involved in the admissions which each had made to the other.

"He knows that I love him; he knows how weak and vile I am," she said to herself. "If Lina were to know too? If she were to see me with the mask off my face, what a monster of perfidy and ingratitude I should seem to her! Oh, I should die of shame. I could never endure the discovery. And to make her unhappy—her to whom I owe so much, my dearest, my best, the guardian angel of my life. Oh, Lina, Lina, if you knew!"

She flung herself on her knees beside the bed, and, with hands clasped above her head, breathed her passionate prayer:

"Let me die to-night. Oh, Thou who knowest how sinful and weak I am, let me die to-night!"

CHAPTER V.

"I MAY NOT DON AS EVERY PLOUGHMAN MAY."

A CHAMBERMAID brought Daphne a letter at half past six o'clock next morning. She had fallen asleep in the summer sunlight after a night of almost utter sleeplessness; the warm air blowing in upon her across the hills on the opposite side of the river; the noises of the early awakened town floating up from the valley below.

She started from her pillow, scared and agitated at the sound of the chambermaid's knock, and took the letter with a trembling hand. Gerald's writing! She knew it too well; yet this was the first letter he had ever addressed to her.

"How dare he write to me?" she exclaimed angrily, as she tore open the envelope.

The letter began with no fond words of endearment. The writer dashed at his meaning with passionate directness, with feeling too intense to be eloquent.

"Tell me what I am to do. After last night, my future, my life, are in your hands. Both belong to you if you will have them. Shall I break the truth to Lina? Shall I tell her how, little by little, in spite of myself, my heart has been beguiled away from that calm affection which was once all-sufficient for the joy of life; how a new and passionate love has replaced the old; and that, although I shall honour, respect, and admire her as the first and best of women till the end of my days, I am no longer, I never can be again, her lover? I think, Daphne, that the hard, outspoken, brutal truth may be the wisest and best. Let us look Fate in the face. Neither you nor I can ever be happy asunder. Will the sacrifice of my happiness secure Lina's? Answer me from

your heart of hearts, my beloved, as you answered me on the bridge last night."

There was not an instant's doubt in Daphne's mind as to how this letter must be answered. Lina's happiness sacrificed to hers! Lina, so good, so pure-minded, in all things so much above her, to be made miserable, in order that she might triumph in a successful treachery!

"I don't think the most virtuous person in the world could loathe me worse than I should loathe myself, if I were to do this thing," she said to herself resolutely.

She sat down by the open window, wrapped in her loose white dressing-gown, her soft golden hair falling over her shoulders like a veil, her cheeks pale, her eyes heavy, an image of youthful sorrow.

"Not for this wide world," she wrote, answering Gerald Goring's question as directly as he had asked it, "not to be completely and unspeakably happy would I rob my sister of her happiness; not if it could be done without making me a monster of ingratitude, the most treacherous and despicable of

women. All you and I have to do is to forget our folly of last night, and to be true, each of us, to the promises we have made. You would be, indeed, a loser, condemned to pay a life-long penalty for your foolishness, if you could barter such a flower as Madoline for such a weed as me. Be true to her, and you will find your reward in that truth. Do you know how good she is; how priceless in her purity and love; and could you let her go for my sake—for a creature who is compounded of faults and inconsistencies, caprices, self-will; a creature with no more soul than Undine? Remember how long she has loved you; think how much she is above you in the beauty of her character; how fitted she is to make your home happy, your life nobler and better than it could ever be without her. Why, if, in some moment of madness, you were to surrender her love, your life to come would be one long regret for having lost her. Forget, as I shall forget; be true, as I will be true, heaven helping me; and let me write myself, without a blush, in this my first, and, perhaps, my last letter to you,—

Your Sister, "Daphne."

Her eyes were streaming with tears as she wrote. Every word came from her heart. There was no duplicity of thought, no lurking hope that Gerald might refuse to be ruled by her. She wrote to him faithfully, honestly, resolutely, her heart and mind exalted by her intense love of her sister. And when the letter was sealed and given to the chambermaid—who must have wondered a little at this outbreak of letter-writing before breakfast as a new development in the British tourist—she stole softly to the door leading into Madoline's room and opened it as noiselessly as she could.

Lina was still asleep, the calm beautiful face turned towards the sunlight, the long dark lashes drooping on the oval cheek, the lips faintly parted. Daphne crept to the bed-side and sat down beside her sister's pillow. Lina awoke and looked up at her.

"My pet, have you been here long? Is it late?" she asked.

"Late for you, love. About half-past seven. I have only this moment come in."

"How white and haggard you look!" said

Lina anxiously. "Have you had a bad night?"

"I did not sleep particularly well. I seldom can in a strange place."

"Daphne, I am afraid you are ill—or unhappy. There was something in your manner last night that alarmed me."

"I am not ill; and I have not felt so happy for a long time as I feel this morning."

"Why, dearest?"

"Because I have been making good resolutions, and I mean to act upon them."

"Would it be too much to ask what they are?"

"Oh, a general determination to be very obedient to you, and very respectful to my father, and very tolerant of Edgar's stupidities, and all that kind of thing, don't you know?"

"My darling, I can't bear to hear you talk of Edgar like that. He is so thoroughly good."

"Yes," sighed Daphne, with an air of resignation. "If there were only a little rift in his goodness, I should get on with him so much better. It

is dreadful to have to deal with a man whose excellence is always putting one to shame."

"I think you could easily be worthy of him."

"No, I couldn't. And if I could I wouldn't. And now I must run away and dress, for I want to explore those hills across the river before breakfast."

She looked bright and fresh and full of youthful energy an hour afterwards, when she went down to the sitting-room, where Edgar was loafing about wearily, longing for her to appear. Her neat tailor gown of darkest olive cashmere, and coquettish little olive-green toque, set off the pearly tints of her complexion and the brightness of her loosely-coiled hair. She came into the room buttoning a long Swedish glove, the turned-back sleeve showing the round white arm.

"What a fetching get-up," said Edgar, who was apt to embellish his speech with those flowers of slang which are in everybody's mouth; "but what is the use of those long gloves tucked away under the sleeve of your gown?"

"No use," answered Daphne; "but they're fashionable. I want you to come and ramble on

that hill over there before breakfast. Do you mind?"

"Mind!" cried Edgar. "You know I am always delighted to walk with you. But, I say, Daphne, what was the matter with you last night? You were so cross."

"I know I was; but I am never going to be cross again. I am going to turn over a new leaf. 'I have been wild and wilful, but I am not wilful now.'"

"You are always the dearest and best of girls," answered Edgar fatuously.

They passed Gerald Goring on the stairs. Daphne gave him a friendly nod, just the easiest salutation possible; but her cheek paled as she went by, and her reply to Edgar's next observation was somewhat wide of the mark.

He talked Baedeker to her as they went across the bridge; and he talked Baedeker about the watch-towers; and still again Baedeker when, in the course of their wanderings, they came to a chapel on a height, from whence there was a lovely view, exquisitely beautiful in the clear calm sum-

mer morning. They roamed about together till it was time to go back to the ten-o'clock breakfast, by which hour Sir Vernon had resigned himself to the ordeal of facing his family.

After breakfast there came more sight-seeing, Sir Vernon having decided upon going on to Berne by a late afternoon train. So they all set out together in a roomy landau to explore the town and neighbourhood. They went into the arsenal, where a funny old man in a blue blouse showed them ancient and modern gunnery. They saw the venerable lime-tree which stands in front of the Town Hall and the Rathhaus, propped up with wood and stone; a tree which, according to tradition, was originally a twig borne by a young native of Fribourg when he arrived in the town, breathless from loss of blood, to bring the news of the victory of Morat. "Victory!" he gasped, and died.

Gerald, more than usually cynical this morning, declined to believe in either the twig or the heroic messenger.

"I always shut my mind against all these romantic stories upon principle," he said languidly.

"The outcome of all modern research—Mr. Brewer, and all the rest of it—is to prove that none of these delightful traditions has a germ of truth in it. It saves a great deal of trouble to begin by disbelieving them."

They went about the town in rather a dawdling desultory way, looking at the fronts of old houses, at the queer little shops, and finally paused before the church of St. Nicholas, which they had seen so dimly last night. Edgar insisted upon going in, but Daphne would go no farther than the doorway, where she looked respectfully at the bas-reliefs which she was told to admire.

"I saw quite enough of it last night," she said, when Edgar urged her to go in and explore the interior.

"Why, Daphne, it was too dark for you to see anything!"

"All churches are alike," she answered impatiently. "Please don't worry."

Sir Vernon, who happened to be within earshot, looked at his daughter curiously, wondering at this development of modern manners. Could a pearly

delicacy of complexion, luminous eyes of that dark gray which is almost violet, and bright gold hair, quite make amends for this utter want of courtesy? But Edgar appeared perfectly content to be so treated; and it was Edgar who was most concerned in the matter.

They dawdled away a long morning seeing the town and driving about the somewhat pastoral landscape which surrounds it, lunched late, and started at five o'clock for Berne, where they arrived at the Berner Hof in time for a late dinner. Daphne grumbled a little on the way, protesting against the landscape between Fribourg and Berne as a relapse into English pastoral scenery.

"What do I want with meadows, and orchards, and cottages?" she exclaimed. "I can see those in England. If it were not for the cows living on the ground-floor, and the fodder being carried up to the roof by those queer slanting covered ways, there wouldn't be a shade of difference between the houses here and those at home, except that these are ever so much dirtier."

"You ought to have come a few million years

ago, when Switzerland was a glacial chaos," said Gerald.

The Berner Hof pleased Sir Vernon by its spaciousness and air of English comfort, but it impressed Daphne as an hotel which would have been more in keeping with Liverpool or Manchester.

"I had quite made up my mind that in Switzerland we should stop at wooden *chalets* perched upon mountain ledges, with an impending avalanche always in view, and the '*Ranz des Vaches*' sounding in the distance all day long."

"There are such hostelries," answered Gerald; "but I think, if you found yourself at one of them, you would be rather inclined to wish yourself at the Berner Hof, or the Beau Rivage."

Next day was the first Tuesday in the month, and the occasion of the monthly market, a grand assemblage of small dealers from the adjacent country.

They all went out directly after breakfast, and proceeded straight to the noble central street, a mile in length, which under various names pierces

the town in a straight unbroken line from one end to the other. Very old and quaint are the houses in this long street, many of them built over arcades, under which the foot-passengers walk, and within whose arches the market-people set out their stalls. The drapery stalls, gay with many-coloured handkerchiefs fluttering in the summer air; the jewellers' stalls, all twinkling and flashing with that silver trinketry which is a national institution, chains of endless length, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, glittering in the sun; stalls loaded with fruit and vegetables; stalls of gaudy-coloured pottery, jugs and jars of queerest, quaintest shapes; and up and down the stony street cows and oxen being led perpetually, meek, submissive, gentle, beautiful, in an endless procession; while every here and there under a countryman's cart the patient dogs of burden lay at rest, placid but watchful, faithful guardians of the master's property. It was a scene of picturesque and national life which pleased Daphne immensely. She had never seen such a market before, never seen so long a street, except the monotonous length of a Parisian

boulevard as she was being jolted along in a fly from station to station. Here she saw the people in their national costume; here Switzerland seemed really Swiss.

She flew from stall to stall, admiring, selecting, bargaining, wanting to buy a barrowful of red and orange pots and pans.

"They would look so lovely in the corridor at South Hill, on high brackets," she said.

"I'm afraid the brackets would have to be very high," answered Lina, smiling at her.

"I suppose you mean that for a sneer," retorted Daphne, "but if Mr. Burne Jones, or Mr. Rosetti, or Mr. Morris were to say those pots and pans were the right thing, there would be an eruption of them over the walls of every fashionable room in England. I consider them positively lovely. And as for the silver chains, I shall never live without one round my neck."

"Come and make your selection," said Edgar, pointing to one of the biggest and grandest stalls in the open place near the famous clock-tower, where the cock was to crow, and the figure of grim

old Time was to turn his glass, and all manner of wonderful things were to happen just before the striking of the hour. This stall showed the best array of silver trinketry which they had seen yet, and the country people were clustered about it, gazing at the bright new silver, and a good deal at golden-haired Daphne in her creamy Indian silk gown, a radiant figure under a creamy silk umbrella.

"Choose the prettiest, Daphne, and wear it for my sake," said Edgar, with his portly leather purse in his hand, an English pigeon offering himself up to be plucked.

"*Combien?*" he asked, rather proud of his readiness with a foreign language, pointing to the handsomest of the chains, a cluster of many slender chainlets, about three yards long.

"*Wie viel?*" asked Daphne, with a compassionate glance at her affianced.

"It is ver sheep," answered the vendor, showing a disgusting familiarity with the English tongue. "Gut und sheep, sehr schön, ver prurty, funf pound Englees."

"Five pounds!" screamed Daphne: "why, I

thought it would be about five shillings! Pray come away, Mr. Turchill. They see we are English."

She turned from the stall indignantly, and marched across to look at the fountain, where the gigantic figure of an ogre, in the act of dropping a child into the yawning cavern of his jaws, stands out against the tall white houses, balconied, jalousied, like a bit of Parisian boulevard made picturesque by a dash of Swiss quaintness. The vegetables, and the pottery stalls, and the fluttering cotton handkerchiefs were grouped all about the fountain, a confusion of vivid colour.

"That is something like a statue," cried Daphne, looking up unblinkingly at the giant grinning at her through a warm hazy atmosphere. "A dear old thing which recalls the fairy-tales of one's childhood, instead of a stupid old Anglo-Indian general, whom nobody ever heard of, riding a tame old horse. Why don't we have Kindlifressers and other fairy-tale statues in the London streets? They would make London ever so much livelier."

Here Edgar came after her, carrying a small

box neatly papered and tied up, which he put into her hand.

"May you never wear heavier fetters than these!" he said, having composed the little speech as he came along.

"What," she exclaimed, "did you actually buy the chain after all? Well, I do despise you. Could you not see that the man was swindling you?"

"He was not so bad as you think. I only gave him three pounds for the chain, and I believe it is worth as much as that. I should think it cheap at thirty if you were pleased with it," he added, with homely tenderness.

"Oh, you poor predestined victim to extortion," exclaimed Daphne, looking at him with a serio-comic air. "Such a man as you ought never to go about without a keeper. However, as you have been so good as to allow yourself to be fleeced for my sake, I accept the chain with pleasure, and will wear it as the badge of my future captivity."

She shot a swift side-glance at Gerald as she spoke, curious to see how he took this direct

allusion to an engagement which it had been her habit somewhat to ignore. He was standing looking listlessly along the street, interested neither in man nor woman; but though he had an air of utter vacancy, eyes that saw not, ears that heard not, Daphne detected a quiver of lip and brow, which showed her that the shot had gone home.

Sir Vernon had gone to the museum to look at the pictures, leaving the young people free to wander where they pleased until dinner-time. They went up and down the arched ways, looking at the shops and stalls, the country people, the dogs, the cattle; then turned aside from this busy thoroughfare, where all the life and commerce of the canton seemed to have concentrated itself, to explore the dusky cathedral, where all was silence, and coolness, and repose. There was one great disappointment for Daphne. The grand panoramic picture of the Alps, for which the minster terrace is celebrated, was not on view to-day. The mountains hid themselves behind a gauzy veil, a warm vapour which thickened the air above the old city.

"I can't think what I have done to offend the Alps," cried Daphne petulantly. "They seem to bear a grudge against me. They wouldn't show me their frosty pows at Geneva, and they won't at Berne. I am not going to break my heart about them, however. Please let us get the cathedral over as fast as we can, and go and look at the bears. I am dying to see the live bears; for I have seen so many inanimate ones in stone, and wood, and iron, that I seem to have bears on the brain."

They were standing in the open square in front of the cathedral, looking up at the bronze statue of Rudolph von Erlach, with the four seated bears at its base. They went into the church presently, and admired the fifteenth-century stained glass, the sculptured Pietas, and the choir stalls. As they were leaving the church, they saw a man and woman going quietly into the vestry, preceded by the minister in his black gown.

"A wedding evidently," whispered Edgar to Daphne. "Wouldn't you like to see a Swiss wedding?"

"Do you think they are going to be married? What a sober idea of matrimony! I should have thought a Swiss wedding would have been like a scene in an opera."

An inquiry of the verger proved that it was really a wedding, so they all crept quietly into the spacious vestry, and stood in the background, while the priest tied the knot according to the Calvinistic manner.

It was not a grandiose or thrilling ceremonial, yet there was a certain sober earnestness in its very simplicity. The rite, shorn of all ornament, was a religious rite performed with all the grave businesslike straightforwardness of a civil agreement. Matrimony thus approached wore a somewhat appalling aspect: no sweet harmony of boyish voices shrilling a bridal hymn; no mighty organ exploding suddenly in the crashing chords of Mendelssohn's Wedding March; only a man and woman standing before a priest in a naked stony vestry; a priest who interrogated them coldly, with his eyes on his book, very much as if he had been hearing them their Catechism. The man

had a dull indifferent look, and there was that in the bearing and appearance of the dowdily-dressed woman which hinted that the marriage was an after-thought.

Daphne shuddered as she came out of the sunless vestry.

"That is not my idea of a quiet wedding," she said. "Please let us go to the bears; I am dying to see something cheerful."

They went back to the crowded arcades, the stalls, the processional cattle, and all the life and bustle of a monthly market, and down the whole length of the street, till they found themselves on a bridge that spanned a deep hollow between two hills. On one side of the bridge they looked down into the cattle market, where a multitude of blue blouses, of every shade and tone, from the vivid azure garment bought yesterday, to the faded and patched coat of age and poverty, mixed up with the brown, and cream, and roan, and dun of the cows and oxen, made a wonderful harmony in blues and browns. On the other side there was the famous bear-pit, where half-a-dozen mangy-

looking animals are maintained in a state of inglorious repose for the honour of the city.

The bear is not a handsome or a graceful beast, nor does his woolly front beam with intelligence. Yet he has a look of ponderous benevolence, a placid air of being nobody's enemy but his own, which commends him to those who enjoy his acquaintance only at a distance. He is fond of being fed, and has an amiable greediness, which brings him in direct sympathy with his patrons. There is something childlike, too, and distinctly human in his love of buns, to say nothing of his innate aptitude for dancing. These qualities are liable to distract the judgment of his admirers, who forget that at heart he is still a savage, and that his hug is mortal.

Daphne had provided herself with a bag of cakes, and immediately became on the friendliest terms with three ragged-looking Bruins who were squatting on their haunches, ready to receive the favours of an admiring public. She would not believe Baedeker's story of the English officer, who fell into the den, and was killed by these

woolly monsters, after a desperate fight for life.

"I couldn't credit anything unkind of them," she protested. "See how patiently that dear thing waits, with his mouth wide open, and how dexterously he catches a bit of roll."

Even the delight of leaning upon a stone parapet to feed bears in a not too odoriferous den must come to an end at last, and Daphne, having had enough of the national beasts, consented to get into a roomy open carriage which Gerald had found while she was dispensing her favours, to the admiration of half-a-dozen country people, who were leaning lazily against the parapet, and wondering at the beauty of the two English girls in their cool delicate-hued raiment.

There was plenty to admire in the neighbourhood of Berne, albeit the Alps were in hiding, and after a light luncheon at a confectioner's in one of the arcades, they drove about till it was time to dress for dinner.

They started early on the next afternoon for Thun, and between Berne and Thun the Jungfrau

first revealed herself in all her virginal beauty—whiter, purer than all the rest of the mountain world—to Daphne's delighted eyes. Never could she take her fill of gazing on that divine pinnacle, that heaven-aspiring mount, rising above a cluster of satellite hills, like Jupiter surrounded by his moons.

"If you told me that on that very mountain-top Moses saw God, I should believe you," cried Daphne, deeply moved.

"I am sorry to say the pinnacle on which Jehovah revealed himself to his chosen mouthpiece is a shabby affair in comparison with yonder peak, a mere hillock of seven thousand feet or so," said Gerald, looking up from the day before yesterday's *Times*.

"You have seen it?"

"I have stood on Serbâl, and Gebel Mousa, and Ras Sasâfeh, the three separate mountain-tops which contend for the honour of having been trodden by the feet of the Creator."

"How delightful to have seen so much of this world!"

"And to have so little left in this world to see," answered Gerald; "there is always the reverse of the shield."

"It will make it all the pleasanter for you to settle down at Goring Abbey," said Daphne, assuming her most practical tone. "You will not be tormented by the idea of all the lovely spots of earth, the wonderful rivers and forests and mountains which you have not seen, as Edgar and I must be at dear old Hawksyard. But we mean to travel immensely, do we not, Edgar?"

Another distinct allusion to her coming life, the near approaching time when she and Edgar would be one. The Squire of Hawksyard smiled delightedly at this recognition of the bond.

"I am sure to do whatever you wish, and go wherever you like," he answered; "but I am tremendously fond of home, one's own fireside, don't you know, and one's own stable."

"And one's own china-closet, and one's own linen-presses," added Daphne, laughing; "and one's own jams and pickles and raspberry vinegar. Are not those things numbered among the delights

of Hawksyard? But I mean you to take me to the Amazon, and when we have thoroughly done the Andes, we'll go over the Isthmus of Panama, and across Mexico, and finish up with the Rockies. They are only a continuation of the same range, don't you know, the backbone of the two Americas."

Edgar laughed as at an agreeable joke.

"But I mean it," protested Daphne, with her elbow resting on the ledge of the window, and her eyes devouring the Jungfrau. "We are going to be a second Mr. and Mrs. Brassey in the way of travelling."

Mr. Turchill looked somewhat uncomfortable, moved by the thought of a hunting-stable running to seed at home, while he, a wretched sailor at the best of times, lay tossing in some southern archipelago, all among dusky islanders, and reduced to a fishy and vegetable diet. If Daphne were in earnest the sacrifice would have to be made. Upon that point he was certain. Never could he resist that capricious creature; never could he deny her a pleasure, or beat down her airy whims with the sledge-hammer of common sense.

"I believe we shall be one of the most foolish couples in Christendom," he said aloud; "but I think we shall be one of the happiest."

"A girl must be very hard-hearted who could not be happy with you, Edgar," said Madoline, looking at him with a frank sisterly smile. "You are so thoroughly good and kind."

"Ah, but goodness and kindness don't always score, you know," he replied, with a laugh in which there was just a shade of sadness.

CHAPTER VI.

"LOVE IS NOT OLD, AS WHAN THAT IT IS NEW."

SIR VERNON'S party had sailed over the smiling waters of Thun, with its villa-dotted shores, and its low amphitheatre of pastoral hills which form the foreground to the sublimer mountain land. They and all their belongings had been carried into Interlaken by the funny little railway across the Bodelei, that fertile garden-ground between two lakes, which has such an obvious air of having begun life under water. They had seen the long rank of prosperous-looking omnibuses waiting for travellers, and in one of those vehicles they had been carried away from the walnut-tree boulevard, and all the gaiety and fashion of Interlaken, to a

rustic road ascending the hill towards the pine-woods, and the mountain peaks far away beyond them, piled up against the sky.

Here at the Jungfraublich they found a charming suite of rooms prepared for them; rooms not gorgeously furnished or richly ornamented, but with long French windows which looked upon as fair a landscape as the eye of man could desire to behold. There rose the Jungfrau in her sublime beauty, above the fertile valley with its lakes and meadows, its *chalets* and gardens, orchards and *bosquets*; all the simplicity and prettiness of Nature on a small scale lying at the feet of the immensities.

It was twilight when they arrived, and the first star of evening, a faint luminous spot in the blue gray, hovered over the snowy pinnacle of the mountain.

"Oh, you dear!" cried Daphne, to the mountain and not to the star; "you will be a part of my life from this night. How shall I ever live without you when I go back to Warwickshire?"

"You will have to console yourself with an

occasional glimpse of the Wrekin or the Cotswolds," said Madoline, laughing.

"I am almost sorry I ever came to Switzerland," murmured Daphne, turning away from the open window with a sigh, when she had gazed, and gazed, as if she would fain have made herself a part of the thing she looked at.

"Why, dearest?" asked Lina.

"Because I shall be always longing to come back here. I shall never be able to tolerate the eternal flatness of home—mole-hills instead of mountains."

"Hawksyard is rather flat, I admit," said Edgar apologetically; "but it is remarkably well drained. There isn't a healthier house in England."

"Will not all their modern æstheticism—their Queen Anne worship; their straight garden walks, and straight-backed chairs; their everlasting tea-trays, and Japanese screens, and sunflowers, and dadoes—sicken you after this mountain land?" cried Daphne. "Such a narrow, petty, childish idea of beauty! Have these perpendicular people ever seen the Jungfrau, do you suppose?"

"Seen her, and outlived her, and ascended to a higher empyrean of art," answered Gerald. "You poor child, do you know that you are going into raptures about things which a well-bred person would hardly deign to mention, any more than a Pytchley man would stoop to talk about the Brighton Harriers? This is cockney Switzerland, as cockney as the Trossachs, or Killarney, as Ramsgate and Margate. Everybody knows the Jungfrau, at least by sight; everybody has been at Interlaken. It is the chief rendezvous of the travellers who come in flocks and are driven from pillar to post like sheep, with an intelligent interpreter playing the part of sheep-dog. I hope you will do the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa before you go home; and then you will be acquainted with a brace of mountains which may be spoken about in polite society."

"The Jungfrau is good enough for me," answered Daphne; "I shall never behold anything more beautiful. Manfred loved her."

"I beg your pardon, that amiable gentleman did not love anything. 'And you, ye mountains,'

he exclaims, 'why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.' He does not care for the sun, nor for his fellow-men, nor for his own life. He has all the misanthropy of Hamlet, without Hamlet's unselfish reasons for being misanthropic. However, I suppose to young ladies in their teens he will always appear an interesting character. No doubt you will be starting with your alpenstock at daybreak to-morrow in search of the Witch of the Alps. You will most likely discover her by one of the bridges on the road to Grindelwald, offering dirty bunches of edelweiss, or indifferently fresh milk, to the passers-by."

"Daphne is going nowhere without me," said Lina, laying her hand caressingly upon her sister's shoulder. "She is too enthusiastic to be trusted in strange places. You will not go anywhere alone, will you, darling?"

"I will do nothing in this world to vex you," answered Daphne earnestly, with the straightest, clearest look in her lovely eyes.

Gerald Goring heard her tone, and saw that direct and truthful gaze. He knew well how

much that little speech meant; how grave and complete was the promise in those few words. Yes, she would be true, she would be faithful: were it at the cost of two broken hearts. He began to perceive that he had underrated the moral force of this seemingly volatile creature; physically so fragile, so made up of whims and fancies, yet, where honour and affection were concerned, so staunch.

Later in the evening, after they had dined, and Sir Vernon had retired for the night, Mr. Goring loitered alone in the terraced garden of the hotel. The mountain, faintly touched with silvery light from a young moon, rose in front of him, and below glimmered those earthlier lights which told of human life—yellow candle-light in wooden *chalets*; the flare of the gas yonder, faint in the distance, where the walnut-tree walk was all alive with the light of its hotels and its modest Kursaal. A fitful gust of music from the band came floating up the valley. Behind him the hotel stood out whitely against a background of dark pine-woods; lights in many windows. Those

ten lighted windows in a row on the first storey belonged to Sir Vernon's apartments. He looked up, vaguely wondering which was Daphne's window. That one, at the end of the range, most likely—the casement wide open to the night and the mystic mountain-land. While he was deciding this a white-robed figure stepped lightly out upon the balcony, and stood there, gazing at the far-away peaks faintly outlined against a purple sky.

There were three or four other loungers upon the terrace, each with his cigar, the luminous point of which gleamed here and there among the bushes like a glowworm. There was no reason why Daphne should distinguish Gerald Goring from the rest, as he sat in an angle of the stone balustrade, half hidden in the shadow of an acacia, lonely, dissatisfied; yet it was painful to him, in his egotism, to see her standing there, immovable, a lovely statuesque form, with upturned face and clasped hands, worshipping the blind, dumb, unresponsive goddess Nature, and all unconscious that he, her lover, with a human heart to feel and to

suffer, was looking up at her with passionate yearning from the dewy darkness below.

"She does not care a jot for me; she is harder than the nether millstone," he said to himself savagely. "Yet I once thought her the softest, most yielding thing in creation—a being so impressionable that she might be moulded by a thought of mine. I feared the touching of our spirits, as if I were flame and she tinder. Yet our souls have touched, and kindled, and burst into a blaze; and she has strength of mind to pluck herself away unscathed, not a feather of her purity scorched, from that fiery contact."

He sat in his shadowy corner, lazily finishing his cigar, and looking up at the figure in the balcony till it slowly melted from his gaze, and a muslin curtain was dropped across the open window. Then he left the garden and wandered away up the wooded hillside, by narrow winding paths, which seemed to have no particular direction, but to have been worn by the footprints of other idlers as purposeless—it might be as unhappy—as he. He stayed in the shadowy wood for a long time,

smoking a second cigar, and preferring that perfumed solitude, and his own gloomy thoughts to any diversion which the little lighted town down in the green hollow yonder could have furnished him. And then, at last, on the verge of midnight, when all the lighted windows of the Jungfraublich had gone out one after another, and the big white barrack looked blank and bare, he turned and groped his way back to it through the sinuous woodland paths, and was admitted by a sleepy porter, who was mildly reproachful at having been kept up so long.

A grand excursion had been planned for the next day, Sir Vernon approving the scheme, and politely requesting to be left out of it.

"You wouldn't know what to do with me," he said. "I should be a burden to you, and I should be terribly tiresome to myself. I have letters to write which will occupy me all the morning, and in the afternoon I can stroll down to the Kursaal, or sit in the garden here, or take a little walk in the wood. You will be back before nine o'clock, I daresay."

Madoline was loth to leave her father for so long a day. He was an invalid, and required a good deal of attention, she reminded him.

"There is Jinman, my dear; he can do all I want. Of course it is much pleasanter for me to be waited on by you; but Jinman is very handy, and will serve on a pinch."

"But all those letters, dear father," urged Lina, looking at an alarming bundle of businesslike documents. "Could I not help you with those? Could not the greater part of them stand over till we are at Montreux?"

"Some of them might, perhaps; but some must be answered to-day. Don't worry yourself about me, Lina; I know you have set your heart upon going up to Mürren with Daphne."

"I should like to show her the scenery which delighted me so years ago," answered Lina; "but I can't bear the idea of leaving you for so long."

"My dear child, you are talking nonsense," said Sir Vernon testily. "In October you are going to leave me altogether."

"Yes; but I shall not be leaving you in a

strange hotel; and I shall be so near, at your beck and call, always."

Sir Vernon, having made up his mind to the sacrifice, carried it out with consistent fortitude. He himself ordered the carriage which was to carry off his beloved daughter, with those other three who were comparatively indifferent to him.

They drove away from the hotel immediately after a seven o'clock breakfast, in the clear light of morning, while the fields and hedges were still dewy, and the earth wore her fairest freshest colours and breathed out her sweetest odours. Soon after they left the village they came to the road beside the deep and rapid Lutschine, which cleaves the heart of the valley. On either side rose a lofty wall of hills, slope above slope, climbing up to heaven, clothed to the very summit with tall feathery firs, some of stupendous size, the sombre tints of these patriarchs relieved by the tender green of the young larches; the White Lutschine rushing on all the while, a wild romantic stream, tumbling and seething over masses of stone. Here by the river bank they stopped to see the murder-

stone, an inscription cut on the face of the rock, which tells how at this spot a brother slew his brother.

It is a lovely drive, so lovely that it is hardly possible for the mind to be distracted from its fairness by any other thought. Daphne sat silent in her corner of the carriage, drinking in the beauty of the scene, her gaze wandering upward and upward to those mighty hills, those forests upon the edge of heaven, so remote, so inaccessible in their loveliness, the greenery pierced every here and there by narrow streamlets that came trickling down like wandering flashes of silvery light. Solitude and silence were the prevailing expression of that exquisite scene. The cattle had all been removed to the upper regions, to remote pastures on the borderland of the everlasting snow-fields; of human life there were few signs; only a distant *chalet* showing here and there, perched on some ledge of the green hills. The voice of the river was the one sound that broke the summer stillness.

There was a pleasant contrast to this solemn loneliness, this silent loveliness of Nature without

humanity, when the carriage drove jingling up to the inn at Lauterbrunnen, where there was all the life and bustle of a country inn at fair-time or market. Many vehicles and horses in the open space in front of the house; a long verandah, under which travellers were sitting resting after an early morning tramp from Mürren or Grindelwald; guides, with swarthy sunburnt faces, homely, good-natured, unintelligent, sitting at ease upon a long stone parapet, waiting their chances; a great fuss and noise of taking horses in and bringing horses out; a call for hay and water; a few people strolling down the road to look at the Staubach, and telling each other admiringly, inspired by the prophet Baedeker, that it is the highest unbroken fall in the world. It was very glorious in the morning sunshine, a dim rainbow-tinted arc of spray; and Daphne thought of the witch of the Alps, and how she had worn this cloud-like fall as a garment, when she showed herself to Manfred. There was no inn there in those far-away romantic days—no odour of bad brandy and worse wine; no tourists; no cockneyism of any kind—only the

sweet pastoral valley in its lonely beauty, and the solemn regions of mountain and snow rising whitely above its placid greenery, and walling it in from the common-place earth.

There was a halt of half an hour or so at Lauterbrunnen, just long enough to pay proper homage to the Staubach, and to explore the queer little primitive village, and for Daphne to burden herself with a number of souvenirs, all more or less of a staggy or goaty order, bargaining sturdily for the same with the sunburnt proprietor of a covered stall opposite the inn, whose honesty in no case demanded more than thrice the amount he was prepared to accept. By the time Daphne had concluded her transactions with this merchant of mountain *bric-à-brac*, and had made herself spiky with paper-knives and walking-sticks of the horny kind—which treasures she reluctantly surrendered to the safe keeping of an inn servant, to be packed in the carriage against her return—the steeds were ready to convey the two ladies up the mountain-path, the gentlemen being bent upon going up on foot. Daphne wanted to walk, and had just

bought herself an alpenstock with that view, but Lina would not let her undertake the journey; so she handed Edgar her alpenstock, and allowed herself to be hoisted into a queer kind of saddle, with a railing round it, and Lina being similarly mounted, they began the ascent, going through more mud, just at starting, than seemed compatible with such perfect summer weather.

"I hope, Edgar," said Daphne gravely, "that you won't take your idea of my horsemanship from my performance on this animal, and in this saddle, or else I am afraid you'll never let me ride Black Pearl."

Edgar laughingly assured her that her seat was perfection, even in the railed-in saddle, and that she should have the best horse money could buy, or judgment secure.

The two young men went on before them, leaping from stone to stone, and making great play with their alpenstocks as they bounded across the streamlets which frequently intersected their path. It was a narrow, narrow way, winding up the shoulder of the hill, now in sunlight, now in shade;

the summer air sweetened with the scent of the pine-trees; pine-clad slopes above, pine-clad slopes below, sometimes gently slanting downward, a green hill-side which little children might play upon, sometimes a sheer descent, terrible to the eye; chalets dotting the meadows far below; villages spread out on the greensward of the valley, and looking like clusters of toy houses; the road winding through the valley like a silver ribbon; the awful Jungfrau range facing them, as they ascended, in all its unspeakable majesty; grander, and yet ever grander, as they came nearer to it.

Sometimes, as they rode through the pine-trees, they seemed to be riding straight into the snowy mountains; they were so close, so close to that white majesty. Then as they came suddenly into the open, those airy peaks receded, remote as ever, melting farther and farther away as one rode after them, like a never-to-be-reached fairy-land.

"I could almost cry with vexation," exclaimed Daphne after one of these optical illusions. "I

thought we were close to the Jungfrau, and there she stands smiling down at me, with her pallid enigmatical smile, from the very top of the world. Edgar, if you love me, you must take me up that impertinent mountain before I am a year older."

"You were talking yesterday of the Cordilleras."

"I know, but we must finish off the Alps first—Mont Blanc, and the Jungfrau, the Schreckhorn, the Rothhorn, the Matterhorn, the Finsteraarhorn, and all the rest of them. I cannot be defied by the insolence of Nature. She has thrown her gauntlet, and I must positively pick it up. If the mountain won't come to Mahomet—and the general experience seems to show that mountains are obstinate things—Mahomet must go to the mountain. I mean to have it out with Mont Blanc before I die."

"I don't believe a lady has ever done the ascent," said Edgar, leading his mistress's meek and patient steed along a winding ledge. The animal was a mere infant, rising three, but as free

from skittishness as if he had been rising three-and-twenty.

"That shows how densely ignorant you must be of the age you live in," protested Daphne. "Be sure that there is nothing in this life which the man of the present can do which the woman of the present won't imitate; and the more essentially masculine the thing is the more certain she is to attempt it."

"But I hope you don't rank yourself among masculine women, Daphne," murmured Edgar, drawing protectingly near her, as they turned a sharp corner.

"I don't; but I mean to ascend Mont Blanc."

They were approaching the village on the height. The Lauterbrunnen valley was sinking deeper and deeper into remoteness, a mere green cleft in the mountains. They had met and passed many people on their way: ladies being carried down by sturdy natives in a kind of sedan-chair, something of the palki species; voyagers struggling

upwards with their belongings, with a view to spending some days in the quiet settlement among the snow-peaks; guides jogging by with somebody else's luggage; mules laden with provisions. The guides gave each other a grinning good-day as they passed, and exchanged remarks in a *patois* not very easy to understand; remarks that had a suggestion of being critical, and not altogether commendatory, of the clients at that moment under escort.

"Here we are, up in the skies at last," cried Daphne, as she sprang lightly to the ground, spurning her lover's proffered aid, and just brushing against the eager arms held out to receive her; "and oh how dreadfully far away the top of the Jungfrau still is, and how very dirty she looks now we are on a level with her shoulder!"

"It is too late in the year for you to see her in her virginal purity. A good deal of the snow has melted," said Madoline apologetically.

"But it ought not to melt. I thought I was coming to a region of eternal snow. Why, the lower peaks are horribly streaky and brown.

Thank Heaven the Silberhorn still looks dazzlingly white. And is this Mürren? A real mountain village? How I wish we were going to live here for a month."

"I fancy you would get horribly tired of it," suggested Gerald Goring.

She did not stay to argue the point, but ordered Edgar to explore the village with her immediately. The big wooden barrack of an hotel, with its bright green blinds and pine balconies, looked down upon her, the common-place type of an advanced civilisation. Young men, all affecting a more or less Alpine-Clubbish air, lounged about in various easy attitudes; young women, in every variety of hat and gauze veil, read Tauchnitz novels, or made believe to be sketching, under artistic-looking umbrellas. Daphne made but a cursory survey of this tourist population before she started off upon her voyage of discovery, with Edgar in delighted attendance on her steps. Madoline and Gerald, who both knew all that there was to be known about Mürren, were content to loiter in the garden of the Hôtel des Alpes,

dreamily contemplative of the sublimities around and about them.

"I give you half an hour for your explorations," said Gerald, as Daphne and her swain departed; "if you are not back by that time, Lina and I will eat all the luncheon. At this elevation luncheon is not a matter to be trifled with. There are limits to the supplies."

He went into the hotel to give his orders, while Lina walked slowly up and down one of the terraced pathways, looking at the wild chaos of glacier and rock before her, looking, yet seeing but little of that chilly grandeur, caring but little for its origin or its history, with sad eyes turned inward, vaguely contemplating a vague sorrow.

It was not a grief of yesterday's date—it was a sorrow made up of doubts and anxieties which had their beginning in Gerald Goring's letter telling her of his intended trip to Canada. From that hour to this she had perceived a gradual change in him. His letters from the Western world, kind and affectionate as they had been, were altogether different from the letters he had

written to her in former years. When he came back the man himself seemed different. He was not less kind, or less attentive, less eager to gratify and to anticipate her wishes. To her, and in all his relations with her, he was faultless: but he was changed. Something had gone out of him—life, spirit, soul, the flame which makes the lamp glorious and beautiful; something was faded and dead in him; leaving the man himself a gentlemanly piece of mechanism, like one of those victims to anatomical experiment from whose living body the brain, or some particular portion of the brain, has been abstracted, and which mechanically performs and repeats the same actions with a hideous soulless monotony. "Was it that he loved her less? Was it that he had ceased to love her?" she had asked herself, recoiling with shuddering heart-sickness from the thought; as if she had found herself suddenly on the verge of some horrible abyss, and seen inevitable ruin and death below. No, she told herself, judging his heart by her own. A love that had grown as theirs had grown, side by

side with the gradual growth of mind and body, a love interwoven with every memory and every hope, was not of the kind to change unawares to indifference. She was perfectly free from the taint of vanity; but she knew that she was worthy of her lover's love. She, who had been her father's idol, the object of respect and consideration from all about her, was accustomed to the idea of being beloved. She had been told too often of her beauty not to know that she was handsomer than the majority of women. She knew that in mental power she was her lover's equal; by birth, by fortune, by every attribute and quality, she was fitted to be his wife, to rule over his household, and to be a purifying and elevating influence in his life. His mother had loved her as warmly as it was possible for that languid nature to love anything. Their two lives were interwoven by the tenderest associations of the past as well as by the solemn engagement which bound them in the present. No, it was not possible for Madoline, seeing all things from the standpoint of her own calm and evenly-balanced

mind, to imagine infidelity in a lover so long and so closely bound to her. Those sudden aberrations of the human mind which wreck so many lives, for which no looker-on can account, and which make men and women a world's wonder, had never come within the range of her experience.

Rejecting the idea of inconstancy, Madoline was compelled to find some other reason for the indefinable change which had slowly been revealed to her since Gerald's last home-coming. What could it be except the languor of ill-health, or, perhaps, the terrible satiety of a life which had so few duties, and so many indulgences, a life that called for no effort of mind, for not one act of self-denial?

"Every man ought to have a career," she said to herself. "My poor Gerald has none; no ambition, nothing to hope for, or work for, or build upon. The new days of his life bring him nothing but old pleasures. He is getting weary and worn out in the very morning of existence. What will he be when the day begins to wane?"

She had been thinking of these things for a

long time, and had determined upon opening her mind to her lover, seriously, candidly, without reserve, with all the outspoken freedom of one who deemed herself a part of his life, his second self.

Here, in the face of those solemn heights, which seem ever typical of the loftier aims of life—all the more so, perhaps, because of that air of unattainableness which pervades them—she felt as if they were more alone, farther from all the sordid considerations of worldly wisdom than in the valley below. She could speak to him here from her heart of hearts.

He was walking by her side along one of the narrow paths, just where a rustic fence separated the grounds of the hotel from the steep mountain-side—walking somewhat listlessly, lost in a dreamy silence—when she put her arm gently through his and drew a little nearer to him.

"Gerald, dearest, I want to talk to you—seriously."

He turned suddenly, and looked at her, with more of alarm in his countenance than she had anticipated.

"Don't be frightened," she said with a sweet smile. "I am not going to be severe. I am only anxious."

"Anxious about what?"

"About you, dear love; about your health, mental and physical. You remember what you told me before you went to Canada."

"Yes."

"Your trip did you good, did it not?"

"Worlds of good. I came home a whole man."

"But since you came home the old feeling of languor has returned, has it not? You take so little interest in life; you look at everything with such a weary indifferent air."

"My dearest, do you expect me to go into raptures with the beaten tracks and cockney lions of Switzerland, as poor little Daphne does? There is not a yard of the ground we have been passing over that I do not know by heart—that I have not seen under every condition of atmosphere, and in every variety of circumstances. You forget how many months of my life I wasted in balancing myself upon razor-edged *arrêtes*, and hewing my

way up perpendicular peaks with an ice-axe. I cannot gush about these dear old familiar mountains, or fall into an ecstasy because the lakes are bluer and broader than our Avon."

"I don't expect you to be ecstatic, dear; I only want to know that you are happy, and that you take a healthy interest in life. I have been thinking lately that a man in your position ought to have a public career. Without public duties the life of a very rich man must inevitably be idle, since all his private duties are done by other people. And an idle life never yet was a happy one."

"Spoken like a copy-book, my dearest," answered Gerald lightly. "Well, I own I have led an idle life hitherto, but some of it has been rather laborious idleness; as when I accomplished the passage of the Roththal Sattel and ascended yonder Jungfrau between sunrise and sundown; or when I came as near death as a man can come, and yet escape it, while climbing the Pointe des Ecrins, in the French Alps."

"I want you by-and-by to think of another kind of labour, Gerald," said Lina, with tender

seriousness. "I want you to think of doing good to your fellow-men—you, who are so gifted, and who have the means of carrying out every benevolent intention. I want you to be useful in your generation, and to win for yourself one of those great enduring names which are only won by usefulness."

"Come now, my sweetest monitor, there you shoot beyond the mark. Surely Virgil and Horace, Dante and Shakespeare, have won names of wider glory than all the useful men who ever lived. That idea of usefulness has never had much charm for me. I have not a practical mind. I take after my mother, who was one of the lilies of the field, rather than after my father, who belonged to the toilers and spinners. If I had discovered in my nature any vein of the gold of poetry, I would have been willing to dig hard for that immortal ore; but as I can't be a poet, I don't care to be anything else."

"And with your talents, and your wealth, you can be content to be nothing?" exclaimed Lina, deeply shocked.

"Nothing, except a tolerably indulgent landlord, a patron of the fine arts, on a small scale, and by-and-by, if you please—your—obedient—husband."

The last words came somewhat slowly.

"If you are happy, I am content," said Lina, with a sigh; "but it is because I fancy you are not happy that I urge you to lead a more active life, to give yourself greater variety of thought and occupation."

"And do you think that, if I were unhappy, the wear and fret of public life, the dealing with workers whose chief object seems to be to frustrate and stultify each other's efforts; to be continually baulked and disappointed; to have my most generous impulses ridiculed, my loftiest hopes cried down as the dreams of a madman; perhaps, at the close of my career, after I had given my days and nights, my brain and body, to the public cause, to be denounced as an incendiary and a lunatic—do you think a career of that kind would ensure happiness? No, love, Providence, in its divine wisdom, has allowed me to belong to the

lotus-eating class. Let me nibble my lotus, and lie at ease in my sunshiny valley, and be content to let others enjoy the rapture of the fray."

"If I could be sure that you were happy," faltered Lina, feeling very unhappy herself.

"Ought I not to be happy, when you are so good to me?" he asked, taking her hand and pressing it tenderly, with very real affection, but an affection chastened by remorse. "I am as happy as a man can be who has inherited a natural bent to melancholy. My mother was not a cheerful woman, as you know."

This was an undeniable fact. Lady Geraldine, after having made what some people called a splendid marriage, and others a *mésalliance*, had gone through life with an air of subdued melancholy, an elegant pensiveness which suited her languid beauty as well as the colours she chose for her gowns, or the flowers she wore in her hair. She had borne herself with infinite grace, as one whose cup of life was tinctured with sorrow, beneath the snowy calm of whose bosom the slow consuming fire of grief was working its gradual

ravages. She died of an altogether common-place disease, but she contrived so to bear herself in her decay, that when she was dead everybody was convinced she had perished slowly of a broken heart, and that she had never smiled after her marriage with Mr. Giles-Goring. This was society's verdict upon a woman who had lived an utterly selfish and self-indulgent life, and who had spent fifteen hundred a-year upon her milliner.

Lina and Gerald strolled up and down for a little while, almost in silence. She had said her say, and nothing had come of it. Her disappointment was bitter; for she had fancied that it needed but a few words from her to kindle the smouldering fires of ambition. She had supposed that every man was ambitious, however he might allow his aspirations to be choked by the thorns of this world: and here she had found in the lover of her choice a man without the faintest desire to achieve greatness, or to do good in his generation. Had he been such a man as Edgar Turchill, she would have felt no surprise at his indifference to

the wider questions of life. Edgar was a man born to do his duty in a narrow groove; a large-hearted, simple-minded creature, but little removed from the peasant who tills the fields, and whose desires and hopes are shut in by the narrow circle of village life. But Gerald Goring—Gerald, whose ardent boyhood, whose passion for all the loftier delights of life, had lifted him so high above the common ruck of mankind—to find him at nine-and-twenty a languid pessimist, willing to live a life as selfish and as useless as his mother had led before him: this was indeed hard. And it was harder still for Madoline to discover how much she had overrated her influence upon him. A few years ago a word from her had been sufficient to urge him to any effort, to give bent and purpose to his mind; but a few years ago he had been still warm with the flush and fire of early youth.

Daphne and Edgar joined them presently, both warm and breathless after a small experiment in the climbing way.

"We have seen everything, and we have been up a mountain," exclaimed Daphne. "It is the

funniest little village—a handful of wooden cottages perched on a narrow track straggling along anyhow on the very edge of the hill; a little new church that looks as if it had dropped from the clouds; a morsel of a post-office; a stack of wood beside every house; and a bundle of green vegetables hanging to dry in every porch and balcony. Poor people, do they live upon dried vegetables, I wonder? We found an English lady and her son sitting in the middle of the road—if you can call it a road—sketching a native boy. He was a very handsome boy, and sat as still as a statue. We stood ever so long, and watched the two artists; and then we had a climb; and Edgar says I am a good climber. Do you think," coaxingly to Lina, "we might try the Silberhorn after luncheon?"

They lunched in a sunny airy corner of the big bare *salle-à-manger* merrily enough, or with that seeming gaiety of heart which brightens so many a board, notwithstanding that the stream flows darkly enough below the ripple and the gleam. Daphne had made it the business of her

life to seem happy and at ease ever since that fatal night at Fribourg. She wanted Gerald Goring to believe that she was satisfied with her lot—nay, even that she was honestly attached to her plighted husband, and that her conduct that night had been but a truant impulse, a momentary aberration from common sense and duty. She was fighting her battle bravely, sometimes smiling with an aching heart, sometimes really succeeding in being happy, with the inconsiderate unreasoning happiness of youth and health, and the rapture of living in a world where all was alike new and beautiful. After luncheon she went out with Edgar for another ramble, until it should be time to begin the descent to Lauterbrunnen. They had all agreed to walk down, in a leisurely way, after tea; and the horses had already gone back with the two men who had led them up. Daphne wanted to learn where and how she could get nearest to the mountains. It seemed provoking to see them there, so near, and yet as far beyond her reach as if she had been looking at them from her window at Interlaken.

"Would it really be too much for an afternoon walk?" she asked, gazing longingly at the Silberhorn.

Gerald explained the preparations and the assistance, and the length of time which would be required for any attempt upon that snowy crest.

"Please show me the very ledge where the child's red frock used to be seen," she asked, perusing the wilderness of crag and peak.

"What child? what frock?" asked Edgar.

"Don't you know that ever so many years ago a lammergeier carried off a child from this village of Mürren, and alighted with it upon an inaccessible shelf of rock on the side of the Jungfrau, and that for years afterwards some red scraps, the remnants of the poor baby's clothes, were seen amongst the snow."

"A pitiful story, wherever you found it," said Gerald; "but I think the baby's frock would have been blown away or buried under the snow before the vulture had forgotten the flavour of the baby."

And then, seeing that Daphne hungered for

any information about yonder mountain, he condescended to tell her how he and a couple of friends, allied by the climbing propensity rather than by ancient friendship, had ascended the north face of the Silberhorn, with the idea of finding a direct route over its summit to the top of the Jungfrau; how after ten hours of very hard work they had planted their feet on the top of the dazzling peak, only to find the snow falling thickly round them, and the Jungfrau and the Giessen glacier already hidden behind a fleecy cloud; how, after waiting in vain for the storm to pass, they had made a perilous descent to the upper plateau of the Giessen glacier; and how there, amidst thick clouds and driving snow, they groped their way round the edges of huge crevasses before they hit upon a practical path descending the ice-fall: and how, finding the night closing in upon them, they were fain to sit upon a ledge of rock under a sheltering cliff till daybreak.

"Poor things!" exclaimed Daphne with infinite compassion; "and you never reached the top of the Jungfrau after all."

"Not by that way. I have scaled her granite point from the Roththal Sattel."

"And is it very lovely up there?"

"*C'est selon.* When I mounted, the Maiden was wrapped in cloud, and there was no distant view, nor could we spare more than a quarter of an hour for rest on the summit; but we saw an avalanche or two on our way, and altogether we had a very good time."

CHAPTER VII.

"I MEANE WELL, BY GOD THAT SIT ABOVE."

It was pleasant to drink tea at a little table in the garden of the inn, with the white mountain world spread before them in all its glory, flushed with the golden lights of afternoon. Edgar looked ineffably happy as he sat sipping his tea and watching Daphne eat bread and honey, which seemed her chief nutriment in this part of the world; for Swiss poultry and Swiss veal, for all the varieties of *vol-au-vent, fricandeau, ris de veau,* and *fricassée,* under which the inevitable calf disguised himself, she showed herself absolutely indifferent; but she had an infinite capacity for Swiss rolls and Swiss honey.

While they were sitting at tea, resting before they began the downward walk, Mr. Turchill produced a letter which that morning's post had brought him from his mother; one of those worthy common-place letters which set one's teeth on edge when read aloud amidst the loftiest aspects of nature. But Edgar saw nothing beyond the love and the kindness in his mother's epistle, and would have read it on the summit of Caucasus, yea, on that topmost untrodden snow-peak which the Persians call the Holy Mountain, and would have perceived no discord between the letter and the scene.

"The dear mother's letter is full of you, Daphne," he said; "would it bore you and Mr. Goring if I were to read a little of it, Lina?"

Mr. Goring protested, with a stifled yawn, that he would be delighted. "There is nothing," he asserted, "more interesting than domestic correspondence. Look at the Paston letters, for instance. And I could fancy your mother writing quite in the Paston style," he added graciously.

Edgar unfolded the thin, closely written sheet, written in those neat, sloping characters which had been drilled into all the young ladies at Miss Tompion's academy, and crossed—for the habit of crossing a letter had obtained in Mrs. Turchill's youth, and she returned to it instinctively under stress of foreign postage, albeit twopence half-penny is not a ruinous amount to pay for a letter.

"'I am pleased to hear that Daphne is enjoying herself, and that she is so enthusiastic about the scenery. I remember, when I learned drawing at Miss Tompion's doing a very pretty sketch of Chamounix, with Mont Blanc in the background, in black and white chalks on tinted paper. I believe some of the snow was scratched in with a penknife by Signor Pasticcio, but all the rest was my very own, and papa gave me a sovereign when the drawing was sent home. It used to hang in your father's dressing-room, but one of the housemaids contrived to break the glass one day with her broom-handle, and I did not care to go to the expense of having it reglazed: Gilbert is so dear

for all jobs of that kind. I have always understood that the Jungfrau is very inferior to Mont Blanc; but as you say Byron admired it I have no doubt it is very beautiful, though, of course, in a minor degree. Every geography will tell you that Mont Blanc is the higher. I hope you are careful to avoid wet feet'—hum—hum—hum," mumbled Edgar, skipping the tender mother's injunctions about his care of his health, and hurrying on to that part of the letter which related to Daphne. "Oh, here it is. 'Tell Daphne, with my love, that I am going carefully over all the house-linen—weeding out all the sheets that are weak in the middle'—dear old mother! she always will go into details—'and making a large addition to the table-linen. I have also had a new inventory made in duplicate. I know that the modern idea is for the bride to provide the house-linen. That is all very well when the husband is a young man who has his own way to make in the world, but not for my boy, who has a home of his own—a fine old house which his ancestors have lived in, and spent their money upon, from generation to generation. I hope

Daphne will be as fond of the old Hawksyard glass and china—which, as she knows, is the collection of more than a century—as she is of the mountains; but I'm afraid the romantic kind of temperament which goes into raptures with mountains is hardly the disposition which could take delight in housekeeping, and the many details of home-life.'

"I hope you won't be angry with her for saying that," added Edgar apologetically, as he hastily folded the letter, feeling that he had read too much. "You know she means it kindly."

"I know she has been ever so much more indulgent than I deserve," answered Daphne gaily; "I mean to be a most dutiful daughter-in-law, and to learn everything your mother will deign to teach me in the way of housekeeping, from hemming tea-cloths to making mincemeat. One ought to make one's own mincemeat, ought one not, Edgar? Do you and I belong to the class who make their own mincemeat?"

"I think it's rather a question of inclination than of rank, love. But I'd rather you left the

pies and puddings to the cook. I'd rather have you riding across the Vale of the Red Horse with me than stoning raisins or chopping suet in the still-room."

"And I would rather, too."

"Do you know that there is a great deal of quiet sagacity in your mother's gentle depreciation of Daphne's passion for mountain scenery," said Gerald, his face lighting up with something of the old mischievous spirit, something of that gaiety of heart with which he had teased Daphne in the days when she was Poppæa and he was Nero! "This frantic admiration of snow-peaks is only a modern feeling, a mere fashion and fad of the moment, like the worship of Chippendale furniture and Adam chimney-pieces. The old Greeks knew nothing of it. The ancients never raved about their mountains. They valued them only because their tops touched the blue ether, the world peopled by the gods. Even your Shakespeare, the man of universal mind, had no passion for mountain lands."

"Because he had never seen anything higher

than the Wrekin, poor darling!" said Daphne, with delicious compassion; as if she were speaking of a London Arab who had never seen a buttercup.

"Ruskin thinks it was good for his genius to have seen so little. 'No mountain passions were to be allowed to Shakespeare,' he says; 'Shakespeare could be allowed no mountains—not even any supreme natural beauty. He had to be left with his kingcups and clover, pansies, the passing clouds, the Avon's flow, and the undulating hills and woods of Warwickshire, lest it should make him in the least overrate their power on the strong, full-fledged minds of men.'"

"That is remarkably clever," said Daphne; "but there is a tone of calm superiority about it which makes my blood boil. Why will all the critics insist upon patronising Shakespeare, as if they knew so much more about him than ever he knew about himself? Talk of vivisection indeed, vivisection is not half so atrocious as the way Shakespeare has been treated by modern criticism!"

And now, when all the valley below them lay steeped in golden light, when the northward-facing mountains were beginning to take the chill cold gray of evening, and the western pinnacles were flushed with rose and purple, they began their descent of the narrow winding way, gaily, to all seeming, for they talked a good deal, and Daphne lingered on her way to gather the wild flowers that grew on the thymy banks—harebells, and clover, gentian, and the Alpine rose, a white starry flower with a long fragile stem, and delicate ferns, and here and there a handful of wild strawberries. Gerald had more than once to insist upon her hastening her footsteps, lest night should overtake them on the steep mountain path.

"If you loiter so much I will put you into a wooden sledge when we get to the halfway house, and run you down the mountain," he threatened.

Lovelier and yet more lovely looked the pine-woods, the green slopes, the fertile valley, the far-away white peaks, so shadowy, so awful in the changing lights of evening. Half the sky was ablaze with crimson and orange, fading off into

tender opalescent greens and purples, the indescribable hues of rare jasper and rarer jade, as they neared the Staubach. They had loitered as long as it was safe to loiter. The lamps were lighted at the inn, and their coachman was watching for their return. They drove home through the gray twilight, which was fast deepening into night, and through a landscape of deepest gloom—a narrow region, walled in by dark hills; dim lights, dotted here and there amidst the darkness, ever so far apart, telling of lonely lives, of humble peasant homes where pleasure and variety were unknown, a life of monotonous labour, hidden from the world.

"Have you enjoyed your day, Daphne?" asked Lina, as they drove home, the rapid river flowing noisily beside them, the white foam on the waters flashing through the gloom.

"Enjoyed it? There is no word big enough to say how delightful it has been! It is a day that will stand apart in the history of my life," answered Daphne, slipping her hand lovingly through her sister's arm.

"What a privileged nature to be so easily made happy!" said Gerald, with a palpable sneer.

People are apt to let slip society's mask in such a moment, on a dark road shut in by mountain and wood, after a long and thoughtful silence, forgetting that feeling is audible in the darkness, though faces are hidden, and the clouded brow or the quiver of the lip is invisible.

Gerald Goring had been thinking deeply during the hillside walk and the homeward drive, touched inexpressibly by Madoline's affection, and trying as honestly as was possible to a character which was not given to mental or moral effort—trying to face a future clouded over with fears. Could he ever be again, as he had been, Madoline's true lover? This was the question which he asked himself, coming down the hill in the glory of the evening light, a little aloof from the other three. His honour and reverence for her were in no wise lessened by that fatal passion which had changed the current of his life. He knew that of all women he had ever met she was the noblest and the best; that, with her, life would be lifted above

the sordid, vulgar level of selfish pleasures and sensual indulgences; that, as her husband, he could not fail to become in somewise useful to his species, to win some measure of renown, and to leave a name behind him that would sound sweet in the ears of generations to come. He could imagine her in the riper beauty of matronhood, the mother of his children, training up his sons to tread the loftier paths of life, rearing his daughters in an atmosphere of purity and love. He pictured her at the head of his household; he told himself that with such a wife he must be an idiot if he missed happiness. And then he looked with gloomy despairing eyes at the other side of the question, and tried to realise what his life would be with the butterfly being who had crept into his heart and made herself its empress.

As well as he knew Lina's perfection did he know Daphne's faultiness. She was frivolous, selfish, shallow, capricious, vehement. Yes, but he loved her. She had no higher idea of this world than as a place made exquisitely beautiful in order that she might be happy in it; nor of her fellow

creatures than as persons provided to minister to her pleasures; nor of the future beyond life than as a vague misty something which had better not be thought about; nor of duty, but as a word found in the Church Catechism, and which one might banish from one's mind after one's confirmation. Yes, but he loved her. Her faultiness did not lessen his love by the weight of a grain of thistle-down. He yearned to take her to his heart, faulty as she was, and cherish her there for ever. He longed to spend the rest of his days with her, and it seemed to him that life would be worthless without her. She might prove a silly wife, a careless mother. Yes, but he loved her. For him she was just the one most exquisite thing in creation, the one supreme necessity of his soul.

"'*Animæ dimidium meæ.*' Yes, that is what she is," he said to himself as he sat in the summer darkness, with dreamy eyes looking upward to the lonely melancholy hills, where huge arollas of a thousand years' growth spread their black branches against the snow-line just above them. What a desolate world it looked in the gathering gloom!—

only a few solitary stars gleaming in the infinite remoteness of the sky, the moon not yet risen above yonder snowy battlements.

It was past nine o'clock when they drove into the shrubberied approach to the Jungfraublich. The hotel looked dazzling after the obscurity of the valley. Daphne would have liked to dash into the billiard room and challenge her lover to a game; but, since it was impossible for a young lady to play at a public table, she went upstairs to the sitting-room on the first floor, where Sir Vernon was waiting for them, and where there was a table spread with tea, cold chickens, and rolls and honey. Lina sat by her father, telling him the history of their day, and hearing all he had to say about his letters and papers. Edgar was in tremendous spirits, and inclined to make fun of the queer little village on the edge of everlasting snows; Daphne was talkative; Sir Vernon was gracious. It was only Gerald Goring who bore no part in the conversation. He looked worn and wearied with the day's work, and yet it had been nothing for an Alpine climber; a mere constitutional walk, barely

enough to keep a man in training. When tea was over he retired to the balcony, and sat there, smoking cigarettes and watching the moon climb the dark slopes of heaven; while the others looked over newly-arrived papers and periodicals, and discussed to-morrow's trip to Grindelwald and the glaciers.

The morning came, as fair and fresh a dawn as ever peeped shyly across the edge of the Alps, but Gerald, watching the slow kindling of that rosy glow after a sleepless night, greeted the new day with no thanksgiving. To him, in his present frame of mind, it would have seemed a good thing if that day had never dawned; if this planet Earth had dropped out of its place in the starry procession, and gone down to darkness and chaos, like a torch burnt out. He rose with that inexorable sun, which pursues his course with so little regard for the griefs and perplexities of humanity, and was out in the dewy woods above the hotel before civilised people were stirring. Anything was better than to lie on a sleepless couch staring at the light. Here, moving about

among the dark pine-stems, treading the narrow tracks, shifting his point of view at every turn in the path, life was less intolerable. He could think better — his brain was clearer — his pulse less feverish.

"What was he to do?" he asked himself helplessly. What did Wisdom counsel? What did Honour urge? Surely about this latter voice there could be no question. Honour would have him be true to Madoline, at any sacrifice of his own feelings. Duty was plain enough here. He had pledged himself to her by every bond which honest men hold sacred. He must keep his word.

"But if we are both miserable for life?" he asked himself. "Can she be happy if I am wretched? And what charm has existence for me without Daphne?"

"You must forget Daphne," urged Duty; "your first and nobler love must obtain the mastery. You must pluck this idle weed, this mere caprice, out of your heart."

He told himself that the thing was to be done

and he would try honestly to do it. He would steel himself against Daphne's wiles. Did not Ulysses pluck himself away from the enchantress's fatal island, wrench himself out of her very web, and get home to Ithaca sound in body and mind, and live happy ever afterwards with his faithful Penelope? Or at least this is the popular idea of Ulysses, in spite of those breathings of slander which make the Circe episode something more than Platonic. What nobler image can life give than that of a faithful lover, a loyal husband, tempted and yet true? Nor did poor little Daphne go out of her way to exercise Circean arts. She charmed as the flowers charm, innocently and unconsciously. She was no Becky Sharp, weaving a subtle web out of little looks and smiles, drooping lashes, lifted eyelids, the arrowy gleams of fatal green eyes. She wanted to be faithful to her lover, and loyal to her sister. Her letter had been straight and true. If he sinned, he sinned of his own accord, and had no such excuses as Adam used against the partner God had given him.

He wandered about restlessly, in an utterly

purposeless way, till it was time to go back to the seven o'clock breakfast. He would have liked to start alone for the shining slate mountain yonder, to spend the day there in a sultry solitude, lying on his back and staring up at the unfathomable blue, smoking a little, reading Heine a little—Heine's ballad-book had been his gospel of late—idling away the empty day, and growing wiser and better in solitude. But he was pledged to go in beaten tracks; to go and eat and drink at The Bear, and gaze at the lower glacier, like a Cook's tourist, and be faintly interested in the coachman's exposition of the view, and be blandly tolerant of girls selling edelweiss, and boys waking the echoes with Alpine horns, and all the conventional features of that exquisite drive from Interlaken to Grindelwald.

However much he might affect to despise the familiar route, he could not deny the beauty of the landscape by-and-by, when they were all seated in the carriage and had crossed the Lutschine for the first time, and were climbing slowly up the raised road above the river. It was a brilliant morning, the wooded hills steeped in sunlight and balmy

summer air; the tender green of the young shoots showing bright against the sombre darkness of the everlasting pines; water rushing down the hill-sides every here and there, sometimes a torrent, sometimes a fine thread like spun glass, dropping from crag to crag. The two young men got out of the carriage and walked up the hills; the valley through which the road wound was exquisitely verdant—a scene of pastoral beauty, fertile, richly wooded, but passing lonely. Daphne sorely missed the dappled kine which relieve and animate a Warwickshire landscape.

"What in heaven's name has become of the cattle?" she exclaimed. "Here are meadows, and homesteads, and gardens, and orchards, but not a living object in the landscape. I thought Switzerland swarmed with cows, and was musical with cow-bells. And where is the chorus of herdsmen singing the *Ranz des Vaches?*"

"Perhaps there has been an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, and the cows have all been condemned," speculated Edgar.

Gerald explained that the cattle and their

keepers had all gone up into the higher regions to crop the summer herbage.

"And that accounts for this green and silent valley," said Daphne. "It is rather a romantic idea; but I should have liked to see the cattle all the same. I adore cows. I think a Jersey cow, with her stag-like head and eyes, is almost the loveliest thing in creation."

"You shall have a herd of them at Hawksyard," exclaimed Edgar eagerly; "and I will build you a Swiss cowhouse at the end of the walnut walk."

"Thank you so much," said Daphne, with a faint smile; "but I was thinking of them only in the abstract."

There were times when any allusion to Hawksyard and the future irritated her like the sting of a summer insect.

Children appeared at every turn of the circuitous road. Here a sickly, large-eyed girl offered a handful of dingy edelweiss; there an unkempt ill-fed boy ran beside the horses, flapping off the flies with a leafy branch of ash or walnut; anon appeared the mountain musician playing his plain-

tive strain upon the native horn, and waking melancholiest echoes amid the solemn hills. The road crossed the river several times, over covered bridges, wooden arcades, which made a picturesque bit in the landscape, a pleasant lounging place too, on such a summer morning. But there seemed to be nobody about save the fly-flapping boys, and women and children offering new milk or the everlasting edelweiss.

It was the first time Daphne had seen the little velvety white flower, and she was keenly interested in it.

"Poor little colourless ice-blossom, so pale and dull-looking, like a life without joy or variety!" she said. "They say that it grows under the snow. How nice it would be to go and hunt for it oneself! Please give the children plenty of money, Edgar." And Mr. Turchill, whose pockets were always full of loose Helvetian coins—leaden sous and dingy-looking half-francs—scattered his largesse among the natives with a liberality rare in modern excursionists.

Half-way up the hill they came to a rustic

restaurant, where the horses stopped to blow, and where the coachman invited the ladies to go and see a tame chamois in a little shed at the back of the house.

"He will be the first of his race I have seen," said Daphne, "though in Manfred's time this part of the country seems to have been overrun by them."

They went through the restaurant kitchen to the shed behind it, to see the four-footed mountaineer. He was a melancholy little animal, altogether a shabby specimen of the chamois tribe, and looked sadly forlorn in his narrow den. One of his horns had been broken off, perhaps in the struggles that attended his capture.

"It is a painful sight," said Daphne, turning away with a sigh.

She would have given all her pocket-money to set the chamois free; but he was one of the attractions of the house, and could not have been easily ransomed.

And now again across the Black Lutschine, by another covered bridge, and up the steep winding

road through a narrow gorge in the hills, until the cleft widens, and the Grindelwald valley opens before them in all its glory, ringed round with mountains, the Great Eiger standing boldly out in front of them, with broad patches of snow on his dark stony front, behind a bold edge of pine-clad hill. There is unspeakable grandeur in that bleak and rugged mountain rising above the verdure and beauty of the nearer hills.

Daphne clasped her hands in unalloyed delight.

"It would be worth while coming to Switzerland if it were only for this," she exclaimed; "yet I am tortured by the idea of all the mountain-passes, glaciers, and waterfalls that we are not going to see. I have a great mind to throw away my Baedeker. He makes me positively miserable with suggestions that I can't carry out."

"You will be able to see all you care about next year," said Edgar, "when you and I are free to go where we like. I believe it will be always where *you* like."

"Next year seems half a century off," she answered carelessly.

Their journey was nearly done. The carriage went down into the valley, then climbed another hill, and they had passed the outskirts of the village of Grindelwald, and were drawing up in the garden in front of the Bear Hotel. Very full of life and bustle was the inn garden on this bright summer morning. Tourists without number standing about, or sitting under the verandah, Americans, Germans, English, French, all full of life and enjoyment; some starting with their alpenstocks, intent on pedestrian excursions; ladies and sedentary middle-aged gentlemen being hoisted on to mules; carriages driving in; horses being fed and cleaned; a Babel of languages, a perpetual moving in and out.

Mr. Goring ordered a light refection of wine and coffee, rolls and honey, to be brought to a pleasant spot under the verandah, at a point where the view across the deep valley to the hills beyond was widest and grandest. Here they rested themselves a little before starting on foot for the lower glacier. Both Madoline and Daphne were in favour of walking.

"I went on a mule when I was here with my father," said Lina, "and I remember thinking how much I should have preferred being free to choose my own path."

It was a lovely walk, so soon as they were clear of the hotels, and boarding-houses, and the scattered wooden *chalets* of the village, just such a ramble as Daphne loved; a narrow footpath winding up and down a verdant hillside—here a garden, and there an orchard—funny little cottages and cottage-gardens perched anyhow on slopes and angles of the road; a rustic bridge across the rocky bed of a river; and there in front of them the glacier—a mass of corrugated ice lying on a steep slope between two mountains—shining, beautiful, like a pale sapphire. They loitered as much as they pleased by the wayside, Daphne straying here and there as her fancy led her—a restless, birdlike creature, almost seeming to have wings, so lightly did she flutter from hillock to crag, so airy was the step with which she skimmed along the narrow rocky pathway, beaten by the feet of so many travellers. They spent a good

deal of time in the immediate neighbourhood of the glacier, "doing it thoroughly," as Edgar remarked afterwards, with a satisfied air; and then they went quietly back to The Bear, and dined in a corner of the big, barren dining-room, and drove back to Interlaken in the summer dusk, Gerald almost as silent as he had been the night before during the much shorter drive from Lauterbrunnen.

"I'm afraid it bores you to go over the ground you know so well," said Madoline, grieved at her lover's silence, which looked like depression, or mental weariness.

"No; the country is too lovely, one could hardly tire of it," he answered; "but don't you think it intensely melancholy? There is something in the silence and darkness of these hills which fills my soul with gloom. Even the lights scattered about here and there are so remote and so few that they only serve to intensify the solitude. So long as sunlight and shadow give life and motion to the scene it is gay enough; but with nightfall one finds out all at once how desolate it is."

There was more excursionising next day, and again on the next; then came Sunday morning and church, and then a walk through the pine-woods to see some athletic sports that were held in a green basin which made a splendid amphitheatre, round whose grassy sides the audience sat picturesquely grouped on the velvet sward. On this day the young women came out in all the glory of their canton costume—snowy habit-shirts and black velvet bodices, silver chains pendent from their shoulders, silver daggers or arrows thrust through their plaited hair, long silk aprons of brightest colours—a costume which gave new gaiety to the landscape. Then in the evening there was a concert at the little conversation-house in the walnut avenue, a concert so crowded by native and foreigner that there was never an empty seat in the verandah, and the waiters were at their wits' ends to keep everyone supplied with tea and coffee, lemonade and wine. After the concert there were fireworks, coloured lights to glorify the fountains—almost the gayest, brightest scene that Daphne's eyes had

ever looked upon. Then, when Bengal lights and rockets had faded and vanished into the summer night, they walked quietly back to the hotel under a starry sky.

"I believe Daphne likes Bengal lights better than stars," said Gerald mockingly, as he gave Madoline his arm, and went on with her in advance of the others, across a field that lay on the other side of the walnut walk.

"You may believe anything you like of Daphne's bad taste and general idiocy," the girl retorted; and Lina was distressed at thinking how disagreeable these two, whom she would have had so affectionately attached, always were to each other.

And all the while Gerald Goring was wondering what he was to do with his life—whether it were possible to break the chain which bound him, that golden chain which had once been his chief glory—whether it were possible to reconcile honour and love.

They left Interlaken next morning, and went straight through to the little station at Montreux.

Daphne, who had pored over her Baedeker till she fancied that she knew every inch of Switzerland, was deeply grieved at not being able to go on to Lucerne and the Rigi, Flüelen, and all the Tell district; but Sir Vernon would go no farther than Interlaken. He considered that he had made a sufficient sacrifice of his own comfort already for his younger daughter's pleasure.

"I hate moving about, and I detest hotels," he said; "I am yearning for the quiet of my own house."

After this no more could be said. Daphne gave herself up to silent contemplation of the Jungfrau range throughout the journey, by boat and rail, hardly taking her eyes from those snowy peaks till they melted from her view, fading ghost-like in the blue ether.

"They seem to be a part of my life," she said, as she turned from the carriage-window with a regretful sigh; "I cannot bear to think that I have seen the last of them."

"Only for this year," answered Edgar cheerily,

not caring much for mountains in the abstract, but ready to admire anything that Daphne loved. "It is such an easy matter to come to Switzerland nowadays. The Jungfrau is as accessible as Brighton Pier."

CHAPTER VIII.

"THER WAS NO WIGHT, TO WHOM SHE DURSTE PLAIN."

THEY had been at Montreux more than a week, and it seemed to Daphne as if she had lived half her life on the shore of the beautiful lake, with the snowy summit of the Dent du Midi rising yonder in its inaccessible grandeur, above the fertile hills of the foreground, those precipitous green slopes, where *chalets* and farms were dotted about picturesquely in positions that would have seemed perilous for birds' nests.

The villa was charming: a white-walled *château* all plate-glass windows, verandahs, balconies, brightened from roof to basement by crimson and white Spanish blinds. The rooms were prettily

furnished in a foreign style—commodes, cabinets, clocks, candelabra, and Louis Quatorze chairs of a painfully upright architecture. To these Sir Vernon had added several easy chairs and couches of the *pouf* species, hired from an upholsterer at Geneva. Photographs in velvet or ivory frames, books, work-baskets, easels, and five-o'clock tea-tables, brought from South Hill, gave a home-like air to the rooms; and a profusion of the loveliest flowers, exquisitely arranged, told of Madoline's presence.

There was a delicious garden sloping down to the lake, whose gently-curving shore made here a lovely bay; a garden in which roses grew as they only grow in the neighbourhood of water. There were summer-houses of the airiest construction; trellised walks, rose-shaded; a parterre of carefully-chosen flowers, with a fountain in the centre; and the blue bright water at the edge of the lawn.

Here Daphne had established her boat, a light skiff with a felucca sail and a striped awning, to be used at pleasure; a boat which, seen flitting across the lake in the sunshine, looked like a swallow.

There was a capital boathouse at a corner of the lawn, wooden and delightfully Swiss, with balconies fronting the lake, and an upper room in which one could take one's pleasure, sketching, writing, reading, tea-drinking. The weather had been peerless since their arrival at Montreux; and Madoline and Daphne spent the greater part of their lives out-of-doors. They were always together, Daphne rarely leaving the shelter of her sister's wing. She had become amazingly industrious, and had begun a tremendous piece of work in crewels, neither more nor less than a set of curtain-borderings for the drawing-room at Hawksyard. Vainly had Madoline entreated her to begin with an anti-macassar or a fender-stool, some undertaking which would demand but a reasonable exercise of patience and perseverance. Daphne would hear of no work that was not gigantic.

"Do you think Cheops would ever have been famous if he had begun to make pyramids on a small scale?" she asked. "He would have exhausted his interest in the idea, frittered away his enthusiasm upon trifles. How much wiser it was

in him to make a dash at something big while his fancy was at a white heat! If I don't embroider a set of curtains I'll do nothing."

"Well, dearest, you must follow your own fancy," answered Lina gently; "but I'm afraid your life will be a history of great beginnings."

Daphne began with extraordinary industry upon a bold pattern of sunflowers and acanthus leaves, huge sunflowers, huge foliage, on a Pompeian-red ground. Whenever she was not in her boat, skimming about the lake, she was toiling at a leaf or a sunflower, sitting on a cushion at Lina's feet, the sunny head bent over her work, the slim white fingers moving busily, the dark brows knitted, in the intensity of her occupation. She was always intent upon finishing a leaf, or a stalk, or a petal, or on realising the grand effect of a completed flower. She would sit till the last available moment before dinner, rushing off to dress in a frantic hurry, and reappearing just as the subdued announcement of dinner was being breathed into Sir Vernon's ear. Edgar was filled with delight to see her so occupied. It seemed to him a pledge of future domesticity.

"It is so sweet to see you working for our home," he said one afternoon, seated on the grass at her feet, and placidly watching every stitch.

"Eh?" she said, looking up in half-surprise, being much more interested in the sunflowers for their own sakes than in their future relation to the old Warwickshire Grange. "Oh yes, to be sure. I hope I shall finish the curtains; but it is a dreadful long way to look forward. There will be three hundred and fifty-five sunflowers. I have done one and a half. That leaves just three hundred and fifty-three and a half to do. I rather wish it were the other way."

"Beginning to flag already?" said Lina, who was sketching a little bit of the mountain landscape on the other side of the lake, a bold effect of sun and shadow.

"Not the least in the world," cried Daphne; "only I do so long to see the effect of the curtains when they are finished. It will be stupendous. But do you know, Edgar, I am afraid your mother will detest them. One requires to be educated up to sunflowers; and Mrs. Turchill belongs to that

degraded period of art in which people could see beauty in roses and lilies."

"One can hardly look back upon those dark ages without a shudder," said Gerald Goring, stretched on a rustic bench close at hand, looking up at the blue sky, an image of purposeless idleness. "Thank Providence we have emerged from the age of curves into the age of angles—from the Hogarthian to the Burne-Jonesian ideal of beauty."

"There was a period in my own life when I had not awakened to the loveliness of the sunflower," said Daphne gravely. "I know the first time I was introduced to one in crewel-work I thought it hideous; but since I have known Tadema's pictures I am another creature. Yet I doubt if, even in my regenerate state, a garden all sunflowers would be quite satisfactory."

"You would require the Roman atmosphere, classic busts and columns, Tyrian-dyed draperies, and everybody dressed in the straight-down Roman fashion," replied Gerald languidly. "No doubt Poppæa was fond of sunflowers; and I daresay

they grew in that royal garden where Messalina held such high jinks that time her imperial husband came home unexpectedly and somewhat disturbed the harmony of the evening."

It was altogether an idle kind of life which they were leading just now at Montreux. During the first week Edgar and Daphne had excursionised a little upon the nearest hillsides in the early morning before breakfast; but lovely as were the chestnut-woods and the limpid streamlets gushing out of their rocky beds and dripping into stone troughs fringed with delicate ferns, exquisite as was the morning air, and the fairy picture of the lake below them, developing some new charm with every hundred yards of the ascent, Daphne soon wearied of these morning rambles, and seemed glad to forego them.

"The weather is getting horribly oppressive," she said, "or perhaps I am not quite so strong as I used to be. I would rather sit in the garden and amuse myself more lazily."

"You must not pretend to be an invalid," said Edgar cheerily, "come now, Daphne: why, there

are not many girls can handle a pair of sculls as you do."

"I didn't say I was an invalid. In my boat I feel in my element, but listlessly creeping about these hills wearies me to death."

"You are very different from me," answered Edgar reproachfully. "Your company is always enough for my happiness."

"Then you shall have as much of my company as you please in the garden or on the lake. But pray let us be idle while we can. When Aunt Rhoda arrives we shall be goaded to all kinds of excursionising, dragged up every hill in the district."

"I thought you wanted to climb mountains?"

"Yes, mountains; Mont Blanc, or the Matterhorn, or Monte Rosa—anything respectable. But to exhaust one's energy in scaling green banks! Why, in Wales they would call the Col du Jaman a bank. However, when Aunt Rhoda arrives I shall be equal to the effort. Of course we shall have to do Chillon."

"I thought you were so interested in Chillon?"

"Yes, as an image in my mind. I love to gaze at its dark towers from the distance, to send my fancies back to the Middle Ages, penetrate the gloomy prison and keep the captives company—but to go over the cells formally, in the midst of a little herd of tourists, staring over each other's shoulders, and treading upon each other's toes—to be shown by a snuffy old custodian the ring to which Bonnivard was chained, the grating out of which he could see the 'little isle that in his very face did smile' —that is a kind of thing which I absolutely abhor."

Mrs. Ferrers had written to her brother, informing him that as she had been all her life longing for a glimpse of Swiss scenery, and that as so favourable an opportunity had now presented itself for the gratification of that desire, she had made up her mind to come straight to Montreux by herself.

"It is a tremendous undertaking for one who has travelled so little," she wrote; "for you know, dear Vernon, how my devotion to Lina and your interests kept me a prisoner at South Hill during those years in which I should naturally have been

seeing all that is worth seeing in this beautiful world. It is an awful idea to travel all the way from Warwickshire to Lake Leman, with only a maid, but I feel that this is a golden opportunity which must not be lost. To be in Switzerland with you and dearest Lina will be a delight, the memory of which will endure all my life. It is quite hopeless to suppose that dear Marmaduke can ever travel with me beyond Cheltenham, or Bath, or Torquay. His health and his settled habits both forbid the thought. Why, then, should I not take advantage of your being in Switzerland to realise a long-cherished wish? I shall be no trouble to you: I do not ask you even to receive me under your roof, unless indeed you happen to have a spare room or two at your disposal. You can make arrangements for me and my maid to live *en pension* at one of those excellent hotels which I am told abound on the banks of the lake, and I can spend all my days with you without feeling myself either a burden or an expense."

"What are we to do, Lina?" asked Sir Vernon, when his elder daughter had read the

letter; "your aunt will be a terrible bore in any case, but I suppose she will be a little less of a nuisance if we put her out of the house."

"There are three spare rooms," said Lina. "It would be rather inhospitable to send her to an hotel—if she will not be any trouble to you, dear father——"

"Oh, she will be no trouble to me," said Sir Vernon. "I'll take care of that."

"Then I think you had better let me write and ask her to stay with us."

"Ask her!" quoth Sir Vernon, "egad, she has asked herself."

The letter was written, and by return of post there came a gushing reply, announcing that Mrs. Ferrers had broken the intelligence of her departure to dear Marmaduke, who had borne the blow better than might have been expected, and who was amiably resigned to the loss of his wife's society during the ensuing six weeks. Is not a modern Anglican cleric bound to imitate in somewise the example of the early Christian martyrs? Fire or sword he is not called upon to suffer, nor to fight

with wild beasts in the arena; but these small domestic deprivations are a scourge of the flesh, which tend to exercise his heroic temper.

"Todd," said Marmaduke, in a fat and unctuous voice, "you must take particular care of me while your mistress is away. You know what I like, Todd, and you must make sure that I have it."

Mrs. Ferrers arrived one sunny afternoon, with three Saratoga trunks, and the newest things in sunshades. She had a generally exhausted air after her journey, and declared that she seemed to have been travelling since the beginning of the world.

"The dust, the heat, the glare between Paris and Dijon I can never describe," she protested as she sank into the most luxurious of the easy-chairs, which her eagle eye had detected at the first glance.

"Please don't try," said Gerald, "we went through it all ourselves."

"It was something too dreadful," murmured Aunt Rhoda, looking so cool and ladylike in her pale-gray cashmere gown and flounced sicilienne

petticoat, that it was difficult to believe she had ever been a victim to dust and heat.

She was refreshed with tea and bread and butter, and looked round her with placid satisfaction.

"It is really very sweet," she murmured. "This villa reminds me so much of the Fothergills' place just above Teddington Lock—the lawn—the flowerbeds—everything. But, do you know, Switzerland is not quite so Swiss as I expected to find it."

"That was just what Daphne said," answered Madoline.

"Did she really?" murmured Aunt Rhoda, looking across at Daphne, who was sitting idly by the low tea-table. Mrs. Ferrers felt a little vexed with herself at being convicted of coinciding with Daphne.

"I suppose it is inevitable," she said, with a lofty air, "that a place of which one has dreamed all one's life, which one has pictured to oneself in all the brightest colours of one's own mind and fancy, should be just a little disappointing. It

was tiresome to be told at Geneva that Mont Blanc had not been seen for weeks, and it was provoking to find the cabman horribly indifferent about Rousseau—for, of course, I made a point of going to see his house."

"And did you go to Ferney?" asked Daphne eagerly. "Isn't it pretty?"

"My dear Daphne, you forget that I am a clergyman's wife," said Mrs. Ferrers, with dignity. "Do you suppose that I would worship at the shrine of a man who made a mock of religion?"

"Not of religion," muttered Gerald, "but of priestcraft."

"But you were interested about Rousseau," said Daphne. "I thought they were both wicked men—that there was nothing to choose between them."

"Voltaire's infidelity was more notorious," replied Mrs. Ferrers; "I could never have told Marmaduke that I visited the house of an avowed——"

"Deist," interjected Gerald.

Hard pressed, Mrs. Ferrers was constrained to

admit that she had never read a line written by either Voltaire or Rousseau, and that she had only a kind of dictionary idea of the two men, so vague that their images might at any moment become confounded in her mind.

When she had reposed a little after her journey, and had seen the contents of the Saratoga trunks arranged in wardrobe and drawers, Aunt Rhoda showed herself a most ardent votary of the picturesque. She had a volume of Byron in her hand all day, and quoted his description of Leman and Chillon in a way that was almost as exasperating as the torture inflicted by a professional punster. She insisted upon being taken to Chillon on the morning after her arrival. She made Gerald organise an excursion from Evian to the mountain village above, at the foot of the Dent d'Oche, for the following day. She made them take her to the Rochers de Naye, to the Gorge du Chauderon; to Lausanne by steamer one day, to Nyon another day. She was always exploring the guide-books in search of excursions that could be managed between sunrise and sundown.

Sir Vernon, having settled himself in his study at Montreux, with books and papers about him, was just as much dependent for his comfort and happiness upon Lina's society as ever he had been at South Hill. It was out of the question that a daughter so unselfish and devoted could leave her invalid father day after day. Thus it happened that Madoline in a manner dropped out of the excursionising party. Gerald could not be dispensed with—though he more than once declared in favour of staying at home—for nobody else was familiar with these shores, and Mrs. Ferrers protested that it would be impossible to get on without him.

"You all have your Baedekers," he argued, "and you are only going over beaten tracks. What more can you want?"

"Beaten tracks!" exclaimed Aunt Rhoda indignantly. "I'm sure those pathways you took us up yesterday on the way to the Dent d'Oche had never been trodden upon except by the cows. And I hate groping about with my nose in a guide-book. One always misses the things best worth seeing. Do you think we could get on without him,

Daphne?" she asked in conclusion, appealing to her younger niece, to whom she had been unusually amiable ever since her arrival.

"I think we might manage without Mr. Goring," Daphne answered gravely, with never a glance at Gerald. She had scrupulously avoided all direct association with him of late. "Edgar and I are getting to know Switzerland and Swiss ways wonderfully well."

"Have you ever been to the Gorge du Chauderon?" asked Aunt Rhoda.

Daphne confessed that this particular locality was unknown to her. She did not even know what the Gorge was, except that it sounded, in a general way, like a glen or ravine.

"Then how can you talk such arrant nonsense?" demanded her aunt contemptuously. "What good could you or Edgar be in a place that neither of you have ever seen in your lives? You can't know the proper way to get to it, or the safest way to get away from it. We should all tumble over some hidden precipice, and break our necks."

"Baedeker doesn't say anything about preci-

pices," said Daphne, with her eyes on that authority.

"Baedeker thinks no more of precipices than I think of a country lane," answered Aunt Rhoda.

"I am sure Lina would like to have Mr. Goring at home sometimes," said Daphne. Gerald had strolled out into the garden while they talked. "Could we not get a guide?"

"I detest guides," replied her aunt, who knew that those guardians of the strangers' safety were expensive, and fancied she might have to pay her share of the cost. "Gerald may just as well be with us as moping here. I know what my brother is, and that he will keep Lina dancing attendance upon him all day long."

Mr. Goring went with them everywhere, and seemed nothing loath to labour in their service. He knew the ground thoroughly, and led them over it in a quiet leisurely way, unknown to the average tourist, who goes everywhere in a scamper, and returns to his native land with his mind full of confused memories. He had to put up with a great deal of Aunt Rhoda's society during all

these excursions, and was gratified with lengthy confidences from that lady; for Daphne was loyal to her faithful lover, and walked with him and talked with him, and gave him as much of her company as was possible. She talked of Hawksyard and her future mother-in-law, of the tenants, and the villagers, the horses and dogs. She talked of hunting and shooting, of everything which most interested her lover; and then she went home in the evening so weary and worn out and heart-sick that she was glad to sit quietly in the verandah after dinner, petting a tawny St. Bernard dog called Monk, a gigantic animal, who belonged to the house, and who had attached himself to Daphne from her first coming with a warm regard. He was her sole companion very often in her boating excursions, when she went roaming about the lake in her light skiff, enjoying all the loveliness of the scene, as she could only enjoy it, in perfect solitude.

"Surely it is hardly safe for that child to go about without a boatman," exclaimed Mrs. Ferrers, as she stood at the open window of her brother's

study, watching the swallow-sail as it flitted across the sunlit ripples, bending to every movement of the water. "Vernon, do you know that the lake is over a thousand feet deep?"

"I don't think the depth of water makes any difference," replied Sir Vernon calmly. "The Avon is deep enough to drown her; yet we never troubled ourselves about her aquatic amusements in Warwickshire. I have Turchill's assurance that she is perfect mistress of her boat, and I think that ought to be enough."

"Of course if you are satisfied I ought to be," said Mrs. Ferrers, with her ladylike shrug; "but I can only say that if I had a daughter I should not encourage her in a taste for boating. In the first place, because I cannot dispossess my mind of the idea of danger; and in the second, because I consider such an amusement revoltingly masculine. Daphne's hands are ever so much wider since she began to row. I was horrified the other day at discovering that she wears six-and-a-half gloves."

Daphne liked those quiet mornings on the lake, or a ramble among vineyards or orchards, with

Monk for her sole companion, better than the formal pilgrimages to some scene made famous by the guide-books. Those excursions with her aunt and Mr. Goring and Edgar had become passing wearisome. The strain upon her spirits was too great. The desire to appear gay and happy and at ease exhausted her. The effort to banish thought and memory, and to take a rapturous pleasure in the beauty of a picturesque scene, or the glory of a summer sky, was becoming daily more severe. To talk twaddle with Edgar, to smile in his face, with that gnawing pain, that passion of longing and regret always troubling her soul, was a slow torture which she began to think must sooner or later be mortal.

"Can I go on living like this for ever?" she asked herself, after one of those endless summer days, when, in the same boat, in the same carriage with Gerald Goring, lunching at the same inn, admiring the same views, treading the same narrow paths or perilous wooden footbridges, she had yet contrived to keep herself aloof from him. "Can I always go on acting a part—pretending to be true

when I am false to the core of my wicked heart, pretending to be happy when I am miserable?"

The mountains and the lake were beginning to lose something of their enchantment, something of their power to lift her out of herself and to make her forget human sorrow amidst the immensities of Nature. She did not love them less as they grew familiar, nay, her love increased with her knowledge; but the distraction diminished. She could think of herself and her own sorrow now, under the walls of Chillon, just as keenly as in the elm walk in Stratford churchyard. The wide lake glittering in the morning sun was no longer a magical picture, before which every thought of self faded. Gliding dreamily along the blue water she gave herself up to a sadness that was half bitter, half sweet; bitter, because she knew that her life was to be spent apart from Gerald Goring; sweet, because she was so certain of his love. He told her of it every day, however carefully she avoided all direct association with him: told her by veiled words, by stolen looks, by that despondency and gloom which hung

about him like a cloud. Love has a hundred subtle ways of revealing itself. A fatal passion needs not to be expounded in the preachments of a St. Preux, in the moral lectures and intellectual flights of a Julie. Briefer and more direct is the language of an unhappy love. It reveals itself unawares; it escapes from the soul unconsciously, as the perfume from the rose.

Daphne was very thankful when her aunt's active and insatiable spirit was fain to subside into repose; not because Mrs. Ferrers was tired of sight-seeing, but simply because she had conscientiously done every lion within a manageable distance of Montreux. In her secret soul Aunt Rhoda thought contemptuously of the bluest, biggest lake in Switzerland, and all the glory of the Savoy range. Had not these easily-reached districts long ceased to be fashionable? Her soul yearned for Ragatz or Davos, St. Moritz or Pontresina, the only places of which people with any pretence to good style ever talked nowadays. It was all very well for Byron to be eloquent about Lake Leman or ecstatic about Mont Blanc; for in

his time railways and monster steamboats had not vulgarised Savoy, and a gentleman might be rapturous about scenes which were only known to the travelled Englishman. But to-day, when every Cook's tourist had scaled the Montanvert, when 'Arry was a familiar figure on the skirts of the Great Glacier, who could feel any pride or real satisfaction in a prolonged residence on the Lake of Geneva! With all those subtle wiles of which a worldly woman is mistress did Mrs. Ferrers try to direct her brother's thoughts and fancies towards the Engadine. She reminded him how the fashionable London physician had lauded the life-giving, youth-renewing quality of the atmosphere, and had particularly recommended Pontresina, if he could but manage the journey.

"But I can't manage it, and I don't mean to manage it," retorted Sir Vernon testily. "Do you suppose I am going to endure a jolting drive of twenty-four hours——"

"Fourteen at most," murmured his sister.

"A great deal you know about it! Do you think I am going to be carted up hill and down

hill in order to get beforehand with winter on a bleak plateau, diversified with glaciers and pine-trees? It is absurd to suggest such a thing to a man in weak health."

"It is for your health that I make the suggestion, Vernon," replied his sister meekly. "You cannot deny that Dr. Cavendish recommended the Engadine."

"Simply because the Engadine is the last fad of the moneyed classes. These doctors all sing the same song. One year they send everyone to Egypt, another year they try to popularise Algiers. One would suppose they were in league with the Continental railways and steam companies. One might get one's nerves braced just as well at Broadway or Malvern, or on the Cornish Downs; one might get well or die just as comfortably at Penzance or Torquay. You quite ignore the trouble of a change of quarters. I have made myself thoroughly comfortable here. If I were to go to the Engadine I should take only Lina and Jinman, and you would have to take Daphne home and keep her at the Rectory till our return."

This was not at all what Mrs. Ferrers had in view. She had taken for granted that if she could induce her brother to go to the Engadine she would be taken, as a matter of course, in his train. He was a free-handed man in all domestic matters, though he very often grumbled about his poverty; and he would have paid his sister's expenses without a thought, if he were willing to endure her company. But it seemed that he was not willing, and that she had been unconsciously urging him to her own ruin. To have her Swiss experiences suddenly cut short, to have that audacious little flirt Daphne planted upon her for a month's visit! The thing was too horrible to contemplate.

"My dear Vernon," she exclaimed, with affectionate eagerness, "if you do not feel yourself equal to the journey it would be madness to undertake it."

"Exactly my own idea. Please say no more about it," he answered coldly. "I am sorry you are tired of Montreux."

"Tired! I adore the place. It is positively

delicious. A little stifling, perhaps, in the heat of the day, but beyond measure lovely."

After this Mrs. Ferrers never more spoke word about St. Moritz or Pontresina. She saw by last week's "society papers" that everybody worth talking about was taking his or her pleasure in that exalted region; but she only sighed and kept silence. The "society papers" ignored Lake Leman altogether, nor did they ever mention Mont Blanc. It seemed as if they hardly knew that such things existed. Their contributors all went straight through. Aunt Rhoda remembered how, many years before, when she had gone through the Trosachs and had been full of enthusiasm and delight, and had gone home proud of her tour, her travelled friends had so scorned her that she had never again ventured to mention Katrine or Lomond, Inversnaid or the Falls of Clyde.

She settled down as well as she could to the domestic quiet of Montreux—the mornings and afternoons in the garden; the everlasting novels and poetry and crewel-work; Daphne and the St. Bernard sitting on the sloping grass by the

edge of the water, or loitering about among the flowers. She bore this luxurious monotony as long as she could, and then she was seized with a happy thought which opened a little vista of variety.

She discovered, one sultry afternoon, that Lina was looking pale and fagged, and called her brother's attention to that fact.

"I don't wish to alarm you, Vernon," she said, as they were all sitting at afternoon tea on the lawn, in the shade of a magnificent willow, whose long tresses trailed in the lake; "but I believe if you don't give Lina a little change from this baking valley, she will be seriously ill."

"Pray don't say that, Aunt Rhoda; I assure you that I am perfectly well," remonstrated Madoline, looking up from her cups and saucers.

"My dear, you are one of those unselfish creatures who go on pretending to be well until they sink," replied Mrs. Ferrers, with an air of knowing ever so much more about Lina than Lina knew herself. "You are languishing—positively pining for mountain air. Everybody is not created

with the constitution of a salamander," she added, with a contemptuous glance at Daphne, who was sitting in the full glare of the afternoon sun, "and for anybody except a salamander this place for the last three days has been almost intolerable. Dearly as I love you all, and delighted as I am to be with you, it has been only the idea of the dust and the heat of the railway that has prevented my going back to Warwickshire."

Sir Vernon looked uneasily at his beloved daughter. He had kept her a great deal about him; he had let her stay at home to bear him company, when the others were breathing the cool air of the lake, or climbing into the fresher atmosphere of the hills; and now it slowly dawned upon him that his selfishness might have endangered her health. Rhoda was always an alarmist—one of those unpleasant people who scent calamity afar off, and are prescient of coming trouble in the hour of present joy; but it was true that Madoline was pale and languid-looking. She had a fatigued look, and her beauty had lost much of its bloom and freshness.

"Lina is not looking well," he said, glancing at her uneasily; "what can we do for you, dear?"

"Nothing, father," answered Lina, with her gentle smile; "there is nothing the matter."

"You told me this morning that you could not sleep last night," murmured Mrs. Ferrers.

"It was a very warm night," admitted Lina, vexed at her aunt's fussiness.

"Warm! It was stifling. This lake is at the bottom of a basin, completely shut in by hills," said Mrs. Ferrers, as if she had made a discovery. "I'll tell you what we could do, Vernon. I might take the two girls up to the hotel at Glion, or at Les Avants. They are both very nice rustic hotels, clean and airy. A few days in that mountain air would pick Lina up wonderfully."

"Would you like to go, dear?" asked Sir Vernon doubtfully.

"I should like it of all things, if you would go with us," answered his daughter; "but I don't want to leave you."

"Never mind me, Lina. I can get on pretty

well for a few days, sorely as I shall miss you. I suppose three or four days will be enough?"

"Ample," said Mrs. Ferrers, delighted at having gained her point. "We can ramble about and see everything that is to be seen in three or four days."

"So be it, then. Start as soon as you like. You had better send Jinman up at once to engage rooms for you. This is Monday. I suppose if you start to-morrow morning you can come back on Friday."

"Certainly. Three days in that magnificent air will be quite long enough to make Lina strong," replied Mrs. Ferrers, assured that in three days she would have exhausted the pleasures of a lively hotel and picturesque surroundings.

"I wish you were coming with us, dear father," said Madoline.

"My dearest, do you think it would do me any good to have my old bones dragged up an almost perpendicular hill, and to put up with the indifferent accommodation of a rustic hotel? I am much better

taking my ease here. The young men will want to go with you, no doubt."

"If you please, sir," answered Edgar.

Gerald Goring said never a word, but it was taken for granted that he meant to go. He and Madoline must, of course, be inseparable until that solemn knot should be tied which would make them one and indivisible for ever and ever.

CHAPTER IX.

"I WOLDE LIVE IN PEES, IF THAT I MIGHT."

THEY had been three days at the homely, comfortable hotel at Les Avants, and Madoline was looking all the better for the fresh hill-side air, an improvement upon which Mrs. Ferrers expatiated as the latest confirmation of the one all-abiding fact of her own ineffable wisdom. It was one of the loveliest days there had been in all that delicious month of summer weather—passing warm, yet with a gentle west wind that faintly stirred the heavy chestnut leaves, and breathed on Daphne's cheek, or fluttered round her neck like a caress, scarcely moving the soft lace ruffle round her throat. It was a day on which a white gown seemed the only thing possible

in costume, and Daphne and Lina were both dressed in white. It was not by any means the kind of day for climbing or excursionising of any kind, as even that ardent explorer Aunt Rhoda was fain to confess; rather a day on which to wander gently up and down easy paths, or to sit in the pine-woods reading Tennyson or Browning, or adding a few lazy stitches to the last sunflower in hand.

"You seem to go at your work with a good deal less vigour, Daphne," said Edgar, seated at his lady's feet, on a carpet of fir-needles, his knees drawn up to his chin, clad in light-gray alpaca, and a Panama hat on the back of his head—a cool but not especially becoming costume. Mr. Turchill was not one of those few men who look well in unconventional clothes.

"The weather is too warm for industry."

"I'm afraid those curtains will never be finished."

"Oh yes, they will!" said Daphne, "I mean to persevere. I may be a very old woman by the time they are done, but I am not going to give in. Lina says my life is a thing of shreds and patches.

I will show her that I am not to be daunted by the stupendousness of a task. Three hundred and fifty-one and a quarter sunflowers still to be done. Doesn't it rather remind you of that type of the everlasting—a rock against which a bird scrapes its beak once in a thousand years, and when the bird has worn away the whole rock, time will come to an end. Please go on with Luria, and try to be a little more dramatic and a little less monotonous."

"I am a wretched reader," said Edgar apologetically, as he looked for his place; "but I think I might read a shade better if I understood what I was reading. Browning is rather obscure."

"I'm afraid you have not a poetic mind. You didn't seem to understand much of Atalanta in Calydon, which you so kindly read to us yesterday."

"I'm afraid I didn't," confessed the Squire of Hawksyard, with praiseworthy meekness. "Modern poetry is rather difficult. I can always understand Shakespeare, and Pope, and Crabbe, and Byron, but I own that even Wordsworth is beyond me.

His meaning is pretty clear, but I can't discover his beauties."

"Simply because your intellectual growth was allowed to stop when you left Rugby. But I insist upon you learning to appreciate Tennyson and Browning; so please go on with Luria."

"In my opinion, Daphne," remarked Aunt Rhoda, with an oracular air, "it would have been much better for the balance of your mind if you had read a great deal more prose and a great deal less poetry. Good solid reading of a thoroughly useful kind would have taught you to think properly, and to express yourself carefully, instead of perpetually startling people by giving utterance to the wildest ideas."

"I think I speak as the birds sing," answered Daphne, "because I can't help it."

"The habit of sober thought is a valuable one, which I hope you will acquire by-and-by, when you are mistress of a household; or else I am sorry for your future husband."

"Please don't be sorry for me, Mrs. Ferrers," protested Edgar, reddening angrily, as he always

did at any slight to Daphne; "I am so perfectly contented with my fate that it would be a waste of power to pity me."

"It is early days yet," sighed Aunt Rhoda. "But I live in the hope that Daphne will steady and tone down before she becomes a wife."

"If you don't begin to read this instant," whispered Daphne, with her rosy lips close to Edgar's ear, "I shall be made the text of one of Aunt Rhoda's homilies."

Edgar took the hint, and plunged anyhow and anywhere into the pages of Browning.

They lived all day in the woods, taking their luncheon picnic fashion under the pine-trees. The two young men catered, and fetched and carried for them, assisted by Mowser. They brought cold fowls, and sliced Strasburg ham, and salad, fruit and cake, a bottle of Bordeaux, and another of a Swiss white wine, which was rather like a weak imitation of Devonshire perry. But such a meal, spread upon a snow-white tablecloth under pine-trees, over whose dark feathery tops gleam the blue bright summer heaven, is about the most

enjoyable banquet possible for youthful revellers. Even Aunt Rhoda admitted that it was an agreeable change from the home comforts of Arden Rectory.

"I hope my dear Rector is being taken care of," she murmured plaintively, when she had dulled the edge of an appetite sharpened by that clear air.

"I hope you will all do justice to the chickens," said Gerald, looking across at Daphne, who sat by Edgar's side in a thoroughly Darby and Joanish manner. "I remember once being at a picnic in a forest where an elderly fowl was made quite a feature of. My hostess fancied I was desperately hungry, and was quite distressed at my avoidance of the ancient bird."

Daphne's eyes were on her plate, but a slow smile crept over her face in spite of herself. She and Gerald had scarcely looked at each other in all those days among the pine-trees. They had lived in daily intercourse, and yet contrived to dwell as completely apart as if the lake had flowed between them; as if he, like St. Preux,

had gazed across the blue waters to catch the glimmer of his beloved's casement, and she, like Julie, had pined in the home that was desolate without love's fatal presence. It was hardly possible for resolve to have been firmer than Daphne's had been since that night at Fribourg. It was hardly possible for an honest purpose to have been more honestly fulfilled.

Mowser, waiting upon the picnickers, saw that significant look of Gerald's, and Daphne's answering smile; just as she had seen many things at South Hill and elsewhere which only her observant eyes had noted.

"Still at your old tricks, my young lady," she said to herself; "but Jane Mowser has got an eye upon you, and your mockinventions shan't succeed, if Mowser's faithful service can circumprevent you."

After luncheon they all sat idly looking down at the distant lake, lying so far beneath their feet, like a pool of blue water in the hollow of the hills, or wandered a little here and there, searching out higher points from which to look

down at the lake, or across to the cloud-wrapped Alps. As the day wore on the light western breeze dropped and died away, and there came the stillness of a sultry August afternoon, just such an atmosphere as that of the lotus-eaters' isle, the land where it was always afternoon.

Aunt Rhoda, who had lunched more copiously than the others, succumbed to the enervating influence of summer. The outline anti-macassar on which she had been diligently stitching a design of infantine simplicity—a little girl with a watering-pot, a little boy with an umbrella—dropped from her hands. The blue lake below winked at her in the sunshine like a Titanic eye. The soft sweet breath of the pines gratified her nostrils, and that delicious sense of being gently baked through and through in Nature's slow oven finally overcame her, and she sank into a thoroughly enjoyable slumber, a sleep in which she knew she was sleeping, and tasted all the blessedness of repose.

Daphne sat on a knoll a little way below her aunt, struggling with a sunflower, heartily tired

of it all the time, and painfully oppressed by the consciousness of three hundred and fifty-one sunflowers remaining to be done after this one.

"It is like the line of the Egyptian kings," she murmured with a sigh. "An endless procession—too stupendous for the imagination to grasp."

Edgar, stretched at the feet of his adored, had fallen as fast asleep as Aunt Rhoda. Madoline and Gerald had wandered off to the higher grounds. They were going to the Col du Jaman for anything Daphne knew to the contrary.

This particular sunflower now approaching a finish seemed the most irritating of all his tribe. Daphne tightened her thread, pulled it into a knot, boggled at the knot, lost patience, and threw the work aside in a rage.

"Who could do crewel-work on such a stifling day?" she cried, looking angrily down at the lake, with its girdle of towns and villages, gardens and vineyards; looking angrily even at picturesque Chillon, with its mediæval turrets and

drawbridge, angrily at the calm snow-shrouded Dent du Midi, and the dark green hills around its base.

Then, having explored the wide landscape with eyes blind for this moment to its beauty, she looked discontentedly at the reclining form at her feet, the faithful lover, slumbering serenely, oblivious of wasps and centipedes.

"A log," she muttered to herself, "a log. Blind and deaf! Good; yes, I know he is good, and I try to value him for his goodness; but oh, how weary I am—how weary—how weary!"

She flung aside her work, and wandered away along a narrow winding pathway, trodden by the feet of previous wanderers, upward and upward towards the granite point of the Dent du Jaman, gray against the sapphire sky. She walked, scarce knowing where she went, or why: urged by a fever of the mind, which hurried her any whither to escape from the weariness of her own thoughts; as if such escape were possible to humanity.

She had been walking along the same serpentine path for nearly an hour, neither knowing nor caring

where it might be leading her. The gray peak of the granite rock always rose yonder in the same distant patch of blue above the dark pine-trees. It seemed as if she might go on mounting this hilly path for ever and get no nearer to that lonely point.

"It is as far off as happiness or contentment," she said to herself; "vain to dream of reaching it."

She stopped at last, and looked at her watch, feeling that the afternoon was wearing on, and that it might be time for her to hurry back to the family circle. It was past five, and the dinner hour was seven; and she had been roaming upward by paths which might lead her astray in the descent, one woodland track being so like another. She began her homeward journey, walking quickly, her thoughtful eyes bent upon the ground. She was hurrying on, absorbed in her own thoughts, when her name was uttered by that one only voice which had power to thrill her soul.

"Daphne!"

She looked up and saw Gerald Goring, seated on a fallen pine-trunk, smoking.

He flung away his cigarette and came towards her.

"Good afternoon," she said, with a careless nod; "I am hurrying back to dinner."

He put out his hand and caught her by the arm, and drew her towards him authoritatively.

"You are not going to escape me so easily," he said, pale to the lips with strongest feeling. "No; you and I have a long reckoning to settle. What do you think I am made of, that you dare to treat me as you have done for the last month? Am I a dog to be whistled to your side, to be lured away from love and fealty to another by every trick, and grace, and charm within the compass of woman's art, and then to be dismissed like a dog—sent back to my former owner? You think you can cure me of my folly—cure me by silence and averted looks—that I can forget you and be again the man I was before I loved you. Daphne, you should know me better than that. You have kindled a fire in my blood which you alone can

quench. You have steeped me in a poison for which you have the only antidote. Oh! my Œnone! my Œnone! will you refuse the balm that can heal my wounds, the balsam that you alone can bestow?"

Daphne looked at him without flinching, the sweet girlish face deadly pale, but fixed as marble.

"I told you what I thought and meant in my letter," she said quietly. "I have never wavered from that."

"Never wavered!" he cried savagely. "You are made of stone. I have been trying you. I have been waiting for you to give way. I knew it must come in the end, for I know that you love me—I know it—I know it. I have known it almost ever since I came back to South Hill, and saw your cheek whiten when you recognised me; and I have been waiting to see how long this drama of self-sacrifice would last—how long you would deny your love, and falsify your whole nature. It has lasted long enough, Daphne. The chase has been severe enough. Your tender feet

have been wounded by the thorny ways of self-sacrifice. Your poor Apollo's patience is well-nigh worn out. My love, my love, why should we go on dissembling to each other, and to all the rest of the world, looking at each other with stony countenances—dumb—cold, when every throb of each burning heart beats for the other, when every feeling in each breast responds to its twin soul, as finely as a note of music to the touch of the player? Let us end it all, Daphne. Let us make an end of this long dissimulation—this life of hypocrisy. Come with me, dear; fly with me. Now, Daphne—now, this instant, before there is time for either of us to repent. We can be married to-morrow morning at Geneva—it can be easily managed in that Puritan city. Come away with me, my beloved. I will honour and respect your purity as faithfully as if a hundred knights rode at your saddle-bow. My beloved, do you think that good can come to anyone by a life-long lie, by the trampling out of Nature's sweetest purest feeling in two loving hearts?"

He had drawn her to his breast. Folded in a

lover's arms for the first time in her life, she looked up into eyes whose passionate ardour seemed to encompass her with a divine flame: as if this man who clasped her to his breast had been indeed the old Greek god, sublime in the radiance of youth and genius and immortal beauty.

"Daphne, will you be my wife?"

"I cannot answer that question yet," she said slowly, falteringly, after a pause of some moments. "You must give me time. Let me go now—this instant. I must hurry back to the hotel."

"What! when I hold you in my arms for the first time?—when I am steeped in the rapture of a satisfied love? Oh Daphne, if you knew how often in feverish dreams I have held you thus; I have looked down into your eyes, and drunk the nectar of your lips. What?" as she drew herself suddenly away from him; "even now you refuse me one kiss—the solemn pledge of our union; cruel, too cruel girl!"

"To-morrow shall decide our fate," she said. "For pity's sake, as you are a gentleman, let me go."

He released her that moment. His arms dropped at his sides, and she was free.

"There was no necessity for that appeal," he said coldly; "you can go—alone if you choose—though I should like to walk back to the hotel with you. I left—your sister" (it seemed as if it were difficult for him to pronounce Lina's name) "in the garden before I strolled up here. I thought you were with your devoted lover. You say to-morrow shall decide our fate. I cannot imagine why you should hesitate, or postpone your decision. I know that you love me as fondly as I love you, and that neither of us can ever care for anyone else. Promise me at least one thing before we part to-day. Promise me that you will break off this pitiful mockery of an engagement to a man whom you despise."

"I do not despise him—that is too hard a word—but I promise that I will never be Edgar Turchill's wife."

"Lose no time in letting him know that. My blood boils and my heart sickens every time I see him touch your hand. Thank God, he keeps his kisses for your hours of privacy."

"He has never kissed me but once in my life," said Daphne, tossing up her head, and blushing angrily.

"Thank God again."

"Good-bye," she said, looking at him with a pathetic tenderness, love struggling with despair.

He leaned against the brown trunk of a fir-tree, pale to the lips, his eyes fixed on the ground, where the mosses and starry white blossoms, and tremulous harebells, and delicate maiden-hair fern shone like jewels in the golden patches of light which flickered with every movement of the dark branches above them. His eyes perused every leaf and every petal, noting their form and colour with mechanical accuracy of observation. His pencil could have reproduced every detail of that little bit of broken ground six months afterwards.

"Daphne," he said huskily, "you are very cruel to me. I am not going to let you see how low a man can sink when he loves a woman as weakly, as blindly, as madly as I love you. I am not going to show you how base he can be—how sunk in his own esteem. There is some remnant

of pride left in me. I am not going to crawl at your feet, or to shed womanish tears. But I tell you all the same, you are breaking my heart."

"It is all foolishness," said Daphne, pale, but calm of speech and eye, every nerve braced in the intensity of her resolution. "It is folly and madness from beginning to end. You confessed as much just this moment. Why should I sacrifice my honour and my self-respect to gratify a weak, blind, mad love? I love my sister with a truer, better, holier affection than I could ever feel for you—if I had been your wife five-and-twenty years, and it were our silver wedding-day."

She smiled even in her despair at the impossible image of herself and Gerald Goring grown middle-aged and stout and commonplace, like the principal figures in a silver wedding.

"Why cannot you let the past be past—forget that you ever have been so foolish, so false, as to care for me?"

"Forget! yes, if I could do that. It would be as easy to pluck my heart out of my body and go on living comfortably afterwards. No, Daphne,

I can never forget. No, Daphne, I can never go back to the old calm tranquil love. It never was love. It was friendship, affection, respect—what you will, but not love. I never knew what love meant till I knew you."

"Good-bye," she said gently, perceiving that an argument of this kind might go on for ever.

It was sweet to hear him plead; there was even a fearful kind of happiness—half sweet, half bitter—in being alone with him in that silent wood, in knowing that he was her own; heart, mind, and soul devoted to her; ready to sacrifice honour and good name for her sake: for what would the world say of him if he jilted Madoline and ran away with Madoline's sister? Her breast swelled with ineffable pride at the thought of her triumph over this man to whom her girlish heart had given itself unwittingly, on just such a summer afternoon as this, two years ago. The man who had so often seemed to scorn her, to regard her only as a subject for friendly ridicule,

in the beginning of things at South Hill. He was at her feet; she had made him her slave. Her heart thrilled with delight at the knowledge of his love; yet above every selfish consideration was her thought of her sister, and that made her firm as the granite peak of Jaman yonder, rising sharply above its black girdle of firs.

She looked at him for a few moments steadily, with a curious smile, a smile which lighted up the expressive face with an almost inspired look. Her hand rested lightly on the lace at her throat, the finger-tips just touching the pearl necklace, Lina's new year's gift, which she wore constantly. It was her talisman.

"Let us shake hands," she said, "and part friends."

"Friends!" he echoed scornfully, "am I ever anything else than your friend? I am your slave. The greater includes the less."

He clasped her hand in both of his, lifted it to his lips, and then let her go without a word.

The smile faded from her face as she turned

from him. She went slowly down the hill by the winding path. Gerald took a hasty survey of the scene, and then struck downwards by a descent that seemed almost perpendicular.

CHAPTER X.

"FOR LOVE AND NOT FOR HATE THOU MUST BE DED."

When Daphne and Gerald were gone, and the fair woodland scene was empty, a third figure came slowly out of the fir-grove, a substantial form clad in a rusty black-silk gown, short petticoats, side-laced cashmere boots, and a bonnet which was only thirty years behind the prevailing fashion. This antique form belonged to Jane Mowser, who carried a little basket of an almost infantine shape, and who had been gathering wild strawberries for her afternoon refreshment. While thus engaged she had espied Daphne's white frock gleaming athwart the dark stems of the firs, and had contrived to skirt the pathway,

and keep the young lady in view. Thus she had been within earshot when Daphne and Gerald Goring met, and had heard the greater part of their conversation. "I've known it and foreseen it. I knew it would come to this from the very beginning," she muttered breathlessly; "and I'm thankful that I'm the chosen instrument for finding them out. Oh, my poor Miss Madoline, what a viper you have nourished in your loving bosom! Oh, the artfulness of that anteloping girl! pretending to reject him, and leading him on all the time, and meaning to run away with him to-morrow, and be married on the sly at Geneva, as truly as my name is Mowser. But I'll put a stop to their goings on. I'll let in the light upon their dark ways. Jane Mowser will prove a match for an antelope and a traitor."

The little basket trembled in Mrs. Mowser's agitated grasp, as she trotted briskly downhill to the hotel. "I'll make their baseness known to Sir Vernon," said Mowser, "and if he has the heart of a man he'll crush that fair-haired young viper."

Having detested Daphne from the day of her birth, Mowser now felt a virtuous thrill, the sense of a relieved conscience, in the idea that Daphne had justified her dislike. It would have been pain and grief to her had the girl turned out well; but to have her judgment borne out, her wisdom made clear as daylight, every evil feeling of her heart fully excused by the girl's bad conduct, this was comfort which weighed heavily in the scale against her honest sorrow for the mistress whom she honestly loved.

She had no idea that the revelation she was going to make must necessarily lead to the cancelment of Madoline's engagement. Her notion was that if Sir Vernon were made acquainted with the treachery that had been going on in his family circle, he would turn his younger daughter out of doors, and compel Gerald Goring to keep faith with his elder daughter. She allowed nothing for those finer shades of feeling which generally lead to the breaking of matrimonial engagements. It seemed to her that if a man had got himself engaged to a girl, and wanted to cry off, he must

be taken by the scruff of his neck, as it were, and made to fulfil his promise.

When seven o'clock came and the *table-d'hôte*, Daphne was shut up in her own room with a bad headache; Mr. Goring was missing; and there were only Aunt Rhoda, Madoline, and Edgar to take their accustomed places near one end of the long table. A little pencilled note from Daphne had been brought to Madoline by one of the chambermaids, just before dinner:

"I have been for a long long walk, and the heat has given me a dreadful headache. Please excuse my coming to dinner. I will have some tea in my room."

"That foolish girl has been walking too far for her strength, no doubt," said Mrs. Ferrers. "She is always in extremes. But what has become of Mr. Goring? Has he been overwalking himself too?"

"I think not," answered Lina, smiling; "we were dawdling about together near the hotel till four o'clock, and I don't suppose he would start for a long ramble after that."

"Then why is he not at dinner?"

This question was unanswerable. They could only speculate vaguely about the absent one. Nobody had seen him after he parted from Madoline at the garden gate. Perhaps he had walked to Vevey, perhaps to Montreux, miscalculating the distance, and the time it would take him to go and return. There was an uncomfortable feeling all through the slow protracted dinner, Madoline's eyes wandering to the door every now and then, expecting to see Gerald enter; Edgar out of spirits because Daphne was absent; Mrs. Ferrers overcome by the heat, and beginning to perceive that Swiss scenery was a delight of which one might become weary.

"I am so vexed with myself for falling asleep and letting Daphne roam about alone," said Edgar, staring absently at a savoury mess of veal and vegetable to which he had mechanically helped himself.

"I don't see why you should blame yourself for Daphne's want of common sense," answered Aunt Rhoda somewhat snappishly. "It was an

afternoon that would have sent anybody to sleep. Even I, who am generally so wakeful, closed my eyes for a few minutes over my book."

If Mrs. Ferrers had confessed that she had been snoring vigorously for an hour and a half, she would have been nearer the truth.

Dinner came to its formal close in the shape of an unripe dessert, and there was still no sign of Gerald. Edgar went up to the corridor and knocked at Daphne's door to inquire if her head were better.

She answered from within in a weary voice:

"Thanks; no! It is aching awfully. Please don't trouble yourself about me. Go for a nice walk with Lina."

"Don't you think if you were to come out and sit in the garden the cool evening air would do you good?"

"I couldn't lift my head from the pillow."

"Then you will not be well enough to go back to Montreux to-morrow morning? We had better put off the journey."

"On no account. I shall be quite well to-

morrow. It is only a headache. Please go away and enjoy your evening."

"As if I could enjoy life without you. Good-night, darling. God bless you!"

"Good-night," replied the tired voice, and he went away sorrowing.

What was his life worth without her? Absolutely nothing. He had chosen to make this one delight, this one love, the all-in-all of existence.

He went down into the garden with a moody dejected air, and joined Lina, who was sitting in a spot where the view of the valley below and the height above was loveliest; but Lina was scarcely more cheerful than Edgar. She was beginning feel seriously uneasy at Gerald's absence.

"You don't think anything can have happened —any accident?" she asked falteringly.

"Do you mean that he can have tumbled off a precipice? Hardly likely. A man who has climbed Mont Blanc and the Jungfrau would scarcely come to grief hereabouts. I think the worst that has befallen him is to have lost his dinner."

They sat in the garden till the valley and lake

below were folded in darkness, and the moon was climbing high above the dark fir-trees and the gray peak, and then Lina's heart was lightened by the sound of a sympathetic tenor voice, whose every tone she knew, singing *La Donna e mobile,* in notes that floated nearer and nearer as the singer came up the grassy slope below the garden. She went to meet him.

"My dear Gerald, I have been miserable about you."

"Because I didn't appear at dinner? Forgive me, dearest. The heat gave me a racking headache, and I thought a tremendous walk was the only way to cure it. I have been down to Montreux, and seen your father, who is pining for your return. He looked quite scared when I dashed into the garden where he was reading his paper on the terrace by the lake. I was not ten minutes at Montreux altogether."

"Dear father! It was very good of you to go and see him."

"It was only a peep. I'm sorry you felt fidgety about me."

"I am sorry you had a headache. It seems an epidemic. Daphne was not able to appear at dinner for the same reason."

"Poor little Daphne!"

They were to start upon their return journey early next morning, so as to reach Montreux before the tropical heat of afternoon. They all breakfasted together in Madoline's sitting-room between six and seven, Aunt Rhoda, who was a great advocate of early rising, looking much the sleepiest of the party. Daphne was pale and spiritless, but as she declared herself perfectly well nobody could say anything to her.

They started at seven o'clock. There were two carriages; a roomy landau, and a vehicle of composite shape and long service for Mowser and the luggage. Daphne at once declared her intention of walking.

"The walk downhill through fields and orchards and vineyards will be lovely," she said.

"Delicious," exclaimed Edgar; "but don't you think it is rather too far for a walk?"

"Are you too lazy to walk with me?"

"I don't think you need insult me by such a question." On which Daphne set out without another word, waving her hand lightly to Madoline as she vanished at a turn of the road.

Gerald Goring handed the two ladies to their seats in the landau, and took his place facing them. He had a listless worn-out look, as if his pedestrianism last night had exhausted him.

"You are not looking well, Gerald," Lina said anxiously, disturbed at seeing his haggard countenance in the clear morning light.

"My dearest, who could possibly look well in such a languid atmosphere as this? We are in a vaporous basin, shut in by a circle of hills. Down at Montreux it is like being at the bottom of a gigantic forcing-pit; here, though we fancy ourselves ever so high, we are only on the side of the incline. The wall still rises above us. At this season we ought to be at Davos or Pontresina."

"Those are the only places people go to nowadays," said Mrs. Ferrers discontentedly. "I shall

be almost ashamed to tell my friends where I have been. All the people one meets in society go to the Engadine."

"I don't think that idea need spoil our enjoyment of this lovely scenery," said Madoline. "Look at Daphne and Mr. Turchill, what a way they are below us!"

She pointed with her sunshade to a glancing white figure among the chestnut groves below. Edgar and Daphne had descended by those steep straight paths which made so little of the distance, while the horses were travelling quietly along the gentle windings of the road. It was a lovely drive to Montreux, the town and its adjacent villages looking like a child's toys set out upon a green table: the castle of Chillon distinctly seen at every turn of the road; the hillsides shaded by Spanish chestnuts, big and old; verdant slopes mounting up and up towards a blue heaven. They passed the little post and telegraph-office at Glion, a wooden hut, baked through and through with the sun, like an oven; the hotel where the children were at play in the garden,

and a few early rising adults strolled about rather listlessly, waiting for breakfast; and then down by the ever-winding road, past many a trickling waterfall; sometimes a mere cleft in the rock, sometimes a stony recess in a low wall, fringed with ferns, where the water drops perpetually into the basin below; and so by wooded slopes descending steeply to the sapphire lake, past the parish church, picturesquely situated on the hill-side, and by many a public pump with a double spout, and tanks where the women were washing linen or vegetables under an open roof. Some kind of industry was going on at all these public fountains; or at least there was a group of children dabbling in the water.

They were at Montreux before ten o'clock; Sir Vernon delighted to have his elder daughter back again, and even inquiring civilly about Daphne, who had not yet arrived, despite the tremendous spurt she and Edgar had begun with.

"That is just like Daphne," said her father, when he was told how she had insisted on walking

all the way. "She is always beginning something tremendous and never finishing it. I daresay we shall have Turchill down here presently in search of a carriage to bring her the second half of the way."

"Yesterday she gave herself a headache by roaming about the hills," said Aunt Rhoda; "she has not a particle of discretion."

"Do you expect her to be full of wisdom at eighteen, Auntie?" asked Madoline deprecatingly.

"I can only say, my dear, that at eighteen I was not a fool," replied Mrs. Ferrers sourly; and Lina did not argue the question further, knowing but too well how her aunt was affected towards Daphne.

The pedestrians made their appearance five minutes later, none the worse for their long walk through fields and vineyards, and across cottage-gardens and orchards, a walk full of interest and diversity. Daphne, flushed with exercise, looked ever so much better than she had looked at breakfast, where she had been without appetite even for her beloved rolls and honey.

"I have a little business to arrange in Geneva," said Gerald, while they were all sitting about the airy drawing-room in a purposeless way, before settling down into their old quarters and old habits. "I think I shall take the train, as the quicker way, and then I can be back to dinner.

Madoline looked surprised.

"Have you anything very important to do in Geneva?" she asked; "you never said anything about it before."

"No; it is a necessity which has arisen quite lately. I'll tell you all about it—afterwards. Good-bye till dinner-time. You must be tired after your morning drive, and you won't feel inclined for much excursionising to-day."

"I'm afraid we've seen everything there is to be seen within a manageable distance," said Mrs. Ferrers, rather dolefully.

Daphne was sitting near the door. She had dropped into a low deep chair, and sat with her straw hat in her lap, full of wild flowers which she had gathered on her way down. Gerald stooped as he passed her, and took one of the

half-withered blossoms—things so fragile in their delicate beauty that they faded as soon as plucked—and put it in his breast. The act was so carelessly done that no one seeing it would have perceived any significance in it, or could have guessed that the hand which took the flower trembled with suppressed feeling, and that the heart against which it lay beat loud with passion.

"I am going to make all arrangements for our marriage," he said in a low voice.

"Good-bye," she answered, looking straight up at him.

He was gone. Her gaze followed him slowly to the door, and lingered there; then she rose and gathered up her flowers.

"I think I'll go to my room and lie down," she said to Madoline. "Please don't let Edgar come worrying about me. Tell him to amuse himself without my company for once in a way."

"My dearest, I don't think he has any idea of amusing himself without you in Switzerland. How tired you look, my poor pet! Go and lie down and get a nice refreshing sleep after your

walk. You shall not be disturbed till I come myself to bring you some tea. That will be better for you than coming down to luncheon."

"I don't feel much inclined for sleep, though I confess to being tired. I should like you to come and sit with me for a little, Lina, soon after luncheon, if you don't mind."

"Mind! My darling, as if I were not always glad to be with you."

Daphne went slowly up to her room, very slowly, with automatic steps, as one who walks in his sleep. The dark gray eyes looked straight into space, fixed and heavy with despair.

"He is mad, and I am mad," she said to herself. "How can it end—except——"

Her room was bright and pretty, gaily furnished in that bright foreign style which studies scenic effect rather than solid comfort; French windows opening upon a balcony, shaded with a striped awning. The windows looked on to the lake, across the bright blue water to the opposite shore, with its grand and solitary hills, its villages few and far apart. Daphne stood for a long while looking

dreamily at that expanse of bright water, and the bold and rugged shore beyond; at Chillon in its rocky corner; at the deep dark gorge whence the yellow Rhone comes rushing in, staining Lake Leman's azure floor. How lovely it all was—how lovely, and yet of how little account in the sum of man's destiny! All Nature's loveliness was powerless to mend one broken heart.

"What was it that he read on my hand that day at Fontainebleau?" she asked herself. "Was it this? was it this?"

A steamer went by laden with people, a band playing a waltz tune. The world seemed full of thoughtless souls, for whom life meant only idle empty pleasures. Daphne turned away from that sunlit scene sick at heart, wishing that she were lying quietly in one of those green dells through which they had passed to-day, a leafy hollow hidden in the hillside, and that life were ebbing away without an effort.

"Seneca was a wise and learned man," she thought; "but with all his wisdom he found it difficult to die. Cleopatra's death sounds easier—

a basket of fruit and a little gliding snake, a bright pretty creature that a child might have played with, and been stung to death unawares."

She threw herself on the bed, not tired from her walk, which seemed as nothing to the lithe active limbs, but weary of life and its perplexities. Oh, how he loved her, and how she loved him! And what a glorious godlike thing life would be in his company! Glorious, but it must not be; godlike, but honour barred the way.

"Oh God! let me never forget what she has been to me," she prayed, with clasped hands, with all her soul in that prayer—"sister, mother, all the world of love, and protection, and comfort—teach me to be true to her; teach me to be loyal."

For two long hours she lay, broad awake, in a blank tearless despair; and then the door was gently opened, and Madoline came softly into the room and seated herself by the bed. Daphne was lying with her face to the wall. She did not turn immediately, but stretched out her hand to her sister without a word.

"Dearest, your hand is burning hot; you must be in a fever," said Madoline.

"No; there is nothing the matter with me."

"I'm afraid there is. I'm afraid that walk was too fatiguing. I have ordered some tea for you." The maid brought it in as she spoke; not Mowser; Mowser had kept herself aloof with an air of settled gloom, ever since her return to Montreux. "I hope you have had a nice long sleep."

"I have not been able to sleep much," answered Daphne, turning her languid head upon her pillow, and then sitting up on the bed, a listless figure in a tumbled white gown, with loose hair falling over her shoulders; "I have not been able to sleep much, but I have been resting. Don't trouble about me, Lina dear. I am very well. What delicious tea!" she said, as she tasted the cup which Madoline had just poured out for her. "How good you are! I want to talk with you—to have a long serious talk—about you and—Mr. Goring."

"Indeed, dear. It is not often my lively sister has any inclination for seriousness."

"No; but I have been thinking deeply of late about long engagements, and short engagements, and love before marriage, and love after marriage —don't you know." Her eyes were hidden under their drooping lids, but her colour changed from pale to rose and from rose to pale as she spoke.

"And what wise thoughts have you had upon the subject, dearest?" asked Lina lightly.

"I can hardly explain them; but I have been thinking—you know that I am not desperately in love with—poor Edgar. I have never pretended to be so; have I, dear?"

"You have always spoken lightly of him. But it is your way to speak lightly of everything; and I hope and believe that he is much more dear to you than you say he is."

"He is not. I respect him, because I know how good he is; but that is all. And do you know, Lina, I have sometimes fancied that your feeling for Mr. Goring is not much stronger than mine for Edgar. You are attached to him; you have an affection for him, which has grown out of long acquaintance and habit—an almost sisterly

affection; but you are not passionately in love with him. If he were to die you would be grieved, but you would not be heartbroken." She said this slowly, deliberately, her eyes no longer downcast, but reading her sister's face.

"Daphne!" cried Madoline, "how dare you? How can you be so cruel? Not love him! Why, you know that I have loved him ever since I was a child, with a love which every day of my life has made stronger—a love which is so rooted in my heart that I cannot imagine what life would be like without him. I am not impulsive or demonstrative—I do not talk about those things which are most dear and most sacred in my life, simply because they are too sacred to be spoken about. If he were—to die—if I were to lose him—no, I cannot think of that. It is heartless of you to put such thoughts into my mind. My life has been all sunshine—a calm happy life. God may be keeping some great grief in store for my later days. If it were to come I should bow beneath the rod; but my heart would break all the same."

"And if the grief took another shape—if he

were to be false to you?" said Daphne, laying her hand, icy cold now, upon her sister's.

"That would be worse," answered Lina huskily; "it would kill me."

Daphne said not a word more. Her hands were clasped, as in prayer; the dark sorrowful eyes were lifted, and the lips moved dumbly.

"I ought not to have talked of such things, dear," she said gently, after that voiceless prayer. "It was very foolish."

Lina was profoundly agitated. That calm and gentle nature was capable of strongest feeling. The image of a terrible sorrow—a sorrow which, however unlikely, was not impossible—once evoked was not to be banished in a moment. .

"Yes; it was foolish, Daphne," she answered tremulously. "No good can ever come of such thoughts. We are in God's hands. We can only be happy in this life with fear and trembling, for our joy is so easily turned into sorrow. And now, dear, if you are quite comfortable, and there is nothing more I can do for you, I must go back to Aunt Rhoda. I promised to go for a walk with her."

"Isn't it too warm for walking?"

"Not for Aunt Rhoda's idea of an afternoon walk, which is generally to stroll down to the pier, and sit under the trees watching the people land from the steamers."

"Shall you be out long, do you think?"

"That will depend upon Aunt Rhoda. She said something about wanting to go in the steamer to Vevey, if it could be done comfortably before dinner."

"Good-bye! Kiss me, Lina. Tell me you are not angry with me for what I said just now. I wanted to sound the depths of your love."

"It was cruel, dear; but I am not angry," answered Lina, kissing her tenderly.

Daphne put her arms round her sister's neck, just as she had done years ago when she was a child.

"God bless you, and reward you for all you have been to me, Lina!" she faltered tearfully; and so, with a fervent embrace, they parted.

CHAPTER XI.

"IS THERE NO GRACE? IS THERE NO REMEDIE?"

WHEN the door closed on Madoline, Daphne rose and changed her crumpled muslin for a dressing-gown, and brushed the bright silky hair and rolled it up in a loose knot at the back of her head, and bathed her feverish face, and put on a fresh gown, and made herself altogether a respectable young person. Then she seated herself before a dressing-table, which was littered all over with trinket-boxes and miscellaneous trifles more or less indispensable to a young lady's happiness.

She had acquired a larger collection of jewellery than is usually possessed by a girl of eighteen.

There were all Madoline's birthday and New

Year gifts: rings, lockets, bracelets, brooches, all in the simplest style, as became her youth, but all valuable after their kind. And there were Edgar's presents: a broad gold bracelet, set with pearls, to match her necklace; a locket with her own and her lover's initials interwoven in a diamond monogram; a diamond and turquoise cross; and the engagement ring—a half-hoop of magnificent opals.

"I wonder why he chose opals," mused Daphne, as she put the ring into the purple-velvet case in which it had come from the jeweller's. "Most people think them unlucky; but it seems as if my life was to be overshadowed with omens."

She put all her lover's presents together, and packed them neatly in a sheet of drawing-paper, the largest and strongest kind of wrapper she could find. Then, when she had lighted her taper and carefully sealed this packet, she wrote upon it: "For Edgar, with Daphne's love"—a curious way in which to return a jilted lover's gifts.

Then she sat for some time with the rest of her treasures opened out before her on the table where she wrote her letters, and finally she wrapped up

each trinket separately, and wrote on each packet. On one: "For Madame Tolmache;" on another: "For Miss Toby;" on a third: "For Martha Dibb." On a box containing her neatest brooch she wrote: "For dear old Spicer." There were others inscribed with other names. She forgot no one; and then at the last she sat looking dreamily at a little ring, the first she had ever worn—best loved of all her jewels, a single heart-shaped turquoise, set in a slender circlet of plain gold. Madoline had sent it to her on her thirteenth birthday. The gold was worn and bent with long use, but the stone had kept its colour.

"I should like him to have something that was mine," she said to herself; and then she put the ring into a tiny cardboard box, and sealed it in an envelope, on which she wrote: "For Mr. Goring."

This was the last of her treasures, except the pearl necklace which she always wore—her amulet, as she called it—and now she put all the neat little packages carefully away in her desk, and on the top of them she laid a slip of paper on which she had written:

"If I should die suddenly, please let these parcels be given as I have directed."

This task being accomplished at her leisure, and the desk locked, she went once more to the open window, and looked out at the lake. The atmosphere and expression of the scene had changed since she looked at it last. The vivid dancing brightness of morning was gone, and the mellow light of afternoon touched all things with its pensive radiance. The joyousness of the picture had fled. Its beauty was now more in harmony with Daphne's soul. While she was standing there in an idle reverie, a peremptory tap came at the door.

"Come in," she answered mechanically, without turning her head.

It was Mowser, whose severe countenance appeared round the half-open door.

"If you please, Miss Daphne, Sir Vernon wishes to speak with you, immediate, in his study."

Seldom in Daphne's life had such a message reached her. Sir Vernon had not been in the habit of seeking private conferences with his

younger daughter. He had given her an occasional lecture *en passant*, but however he might have disapproved of the flightiness of her conduct, he had never summoned her to his presence for a scolding in cold blood.

"Is there anything wrong?" she asked hurriedly; but Mowser had disappeared.

She went slowly down the broad shallow staircase, and to the room which her father had made his private apartment. It was one of the best rooms in the house, facing the lake, and sheltered from the glare of the sun by a couple of magnificent magnolia trees, which shaded the lawn in front of the windows. It was a large room with a polished floor, and pretty Swiss furniture, carved cabinets, and a carved chimney-piece, and a little blue china clock set in a garland of carved flowers.

Sir Vernon was seated at his writing-table, grim, stern-looking, his open despatch-box before him in the usual official style. A little way off sat Edgar Turchill, his folded arms resting on the back of a high chair, his face hidden. It was the attitude of profound despondency, or even of

despair. One glance at her father's face, and then at that lowered head and clenched hands, told Daphne what was coming.

"You sent for me," she faltered, standing in the middle of the bare polished floor, and looking straight at her father, fearlessly, for there is a desperate sorrow which knows not fear.

"Yes, madam," replied Sir Vernon in his severest voice. "I sent for you to tell you, in the presence of the man who was to have been your husband, that your abominable treachery has been discovered."

"I am not treacherous," she answered, "only miserable, the most miserable girl that ever lived."

Edgar lifted up his face, and looked at her, with such a depth of tender reproachfulness, with such ineffable pity as made his homely countenance altogether beautiful.

"I hoped I should have made you happy," he said. "God knows I have tried hard enough."

She neither answered nor looked at him. Her eyes were fixed upon her father—solemn tearless

eyes, a marble passionless face—she stood motionless, as if awaiting judgment.

"You are the falsest and the vilest girl that ever lived," retorted Sir Vernon. "Perhaps I ought hardly to be surprised at that. Your mother was——"

"For God's sake, spare her!" cried Edgar huskily, stretching out his arm as if to ward off a blow, and the word on Sir Vernon's lips remained unspoken. "That is no fault of hers. Let her bear her own burden."

"She ought to find it heavy enough, if she has a heart or a conscience," cried Sir Vernon passionately. "But I don't believe she has either. If she had a shred of self-respect, or common gratitude, or honour, or womanly feeling, she would not have stolen her sister's lover."

"I did not steal him," answered Daphne resolutely. "His heart came to me of its own accord. We both fought hard against Fate. And even now there is no harm done; it has been only a foolish fancy of Mr. Goring's; he will forget all about it when I am—far away. I will never look

in his face again. I will go to the uttermost end of the earth, to my grave, rather than stand between him and Madoline. Oh father, father, you who have always been so hard with me, do you remember that day at South Hill, directly after Mr. Goring came home, when I begged you, on my knees, to send me back to school, to France, or Germany, anywhere, so that I should be far away from my happy home — and from him?"

Her tears came at this bitter memory. Yes, she had fought the good fight: but so vainly, to such little purpose!

"I knew that I was weak," she sobbed, "and I wanted to be saved from myself. But I am not so wicked as you think. I never tried to steal Mr. Goring's heart. I have never imagined the possibility of my being in any way the gainer by his inconstancy. I have told myself always that his love for me was a passing folly, of which he would be cured, as a man is cured of a fever. I do not know what you have been told about him and me, or who is your informant; but if you have been

told the truth you must know that I have been true to my sister—even in my misery."

"My informant saw you in Mr. Goring's arms; my informant heard his avowal of love, and your promise to run away with him, and be married at Geneva."

"It is false. I made no such promise. I never meant to marry him. I would die a hundred deaths rather than injure Madoline. I am glad you know the truth. And you, Edgar, I have tried to love you, my poor dear; I have prayed that I might become attached to you, and be a good wife to you in the days to come. I have been honest, I have been loyal. Ask Mr. Goring, by-and-by, if it is not so. He knows, and only he can know, the truth. Father, Madoline need never be told that her lover has wavered. She must not know. Do you understand? She must not! It would break her heart, it would kill her. He will forget me when I am far away—gone out of his sight for ever. He will forget me; and the old, holier, truer love will return in all its strength and purity. All this pain and folly will seem no

more to him than a feverish dream. Pray do not let her know."

"Do you think I would do her so great a wrong as to let her marry a traitor? a false-hearted scoundrel, who can smile in her face, and make love to her sister behind her back. She is a little too good to have your leavings foisted upon her."

"If you tell her, you will break her heart."

"That will lie at your door. I would rather see her in her coffin than married to a villain."

Edgar rose slowly from his seat and moved towards the door. He had nothing to do with this discussion. His mind could hardly enter into the question of Gerald Goring's treachery. It was Daphne who had betrayed him; Daphne who had deceived him, and mocked him with sweet words; Daphne whose liking had seemed more precious to him than any other woman's love, because he believed that no other man had ever touched the virginal unawakened heart. And now he was told that she could love passionately, that she could give kiss for kiss, and rain tears upon a lover's

breast, that from first to last he had been her victim and her dupe!

"Good-bye, Daphne!" he said, very quietly. "I am going home as fast as train and boat can take me. I would have been contented to accept something less than your love, believing that I should win your heart in time, but not to take a wife whose heart belonged to another man. You told me there was no one else; you told me your heart was free."

"I told you there was no one else who had ever cared for me," faltered Daphne, remembering her equivocating answer that evening at South Hill.

"I don't want to reproach you, Daphne. I am very sorry for you."

"And I am very sorry that an honest man whom I respect should have been fooled by a worthless girl," said Sir Vernon. "Give him back his engagement ring. Understand that all is over between you and him," he added, turning to his daughter.

"I wish it to be so. I have put all your presents together in a parcel, Edgar," answered

Daphne. "You will receive them in due course."

"It is best to be off with the old love before we are on with the new," quoted Sir Vernon scornfully; "and she says she did not mean to run away with Goring, in spite of this deliberate preparation."

Edgar was gone. Daphne and her father were alone, the girl still standing on the very spot where she had stood when she first came into the room.

"I have told you nothing but the truth," she said. "Why are you so hard with me?"

"Hard with you!" he echoed, getting up from before his desk and looking at her with vindictive eyes as he moved slowly towards the door. "How can I be hard enough to you? You have broken my daughter's heart."

"Father!" she cried, falling on her knees and clinging to him in her despair. "Father, is she to have all your love? Have you no tenderness, no pity left for me? Am I not your daughter too?"

"Your mother was my wife," he answered curtly, pushing her out of his way as he passed from the room.

He was gone. She knelt where he had left her, a desolate figure in the spacious bright-looking room, the afternoon sun making golden bars upon the brown floor, her yellow hair touched here and there with glintings of yellow light.

She remained in the same attitude for some minutes, her heavy eyelids drooping over tearless eyes, her arms hanging listlessly, her hands loosely clasped. Her mind for a little while was a blank: and then there came into it unawares a verse, taken at random, from a familiar hymn:

> The trials that beset you,
> The sorrows ye endure,
> The manifold temptations,
> That death alone can cure.

"That death alone can cure," she repeated slowly, pushing back the loose hair from her eyes; and then she rose from her knees and went out through an open window into the garden.

It was about five o'clock. There was a look of exquisite repose over all the scene, from the snow-bound summit of the Dent du Midi yonder, down to the gardens that edged the lake, like a garland

of summer flowers encircling that peerless blue. It was a bright glad-looking world, and passing peaceful. Far away beyond that grand range of hills lay the ice-fields of Savoy, the everlasting glaciers, gliding with impalpable motion in obedience to some mysterious law which is still one of Nature's secrets, the wilderness of snow-clad peaks and wild moraines, the gulfs and caverns, the unfathomable abysses of silence and of death. Daphne thought of those unseen regions with a thrill of awe as she walked slowly down the slope of the lawn.

"I have seen so little of Switzerland after all," she said to herself, "so little of this wide wonderful world."

She went to the toy *chalet*, the dainty opera-stage boat-house where her boat was kept. There was no friendly Bink here to launch the skiff for her, but the lower part of the boat-house jutted out over the gable, and the boat was always bobbing about in the limpid water. She had only to go down the wooden steps, unmoor her boat, and row away over that wide stretch of placid water which she had never seen disturbed by a tempest.

As she was stepping into the boat, the dog Monk came bounding and leaping across the grass, and bounced into her arms, putting his huge fore-feet on her shoulders, and sweeping an affectionate tongue over her pallid face. He had not seen her since her return from the hills, and was wild with rapture at the idea of reunion.

"No, Monk, not to-day," she said gently, as he tried to get into the boat with her; "not to-day, dear faithful old Monk."

The huge creature could have upset the boat with one bound; and the little hand stretched out to push him back must have been as a fluttering rose-leaf against his sinewy breast; but there was a moral force in the blanched face and the steady eye which dominated his brute power. He recoiled, and lifted up his head with a plaintive howl as the boat shot off, the twin sails, the white and scarlet awning, flashing in the sun.

A little way from the shore Daphne paused, resting on her oars, and looking back at the bright garden, with its roses and magnolias, and many-coloured flower-beds, the white villa gay with its

crimson-striped blinds; and then with one wide gaze she looked round the lovely landscape, the long range of hills, in all their infinite variety of light and shadow, verdant slopes streaked with threads of glittering water, vineyards and low gray walls, rising terrace above terrace, quaint Vevey, and gray old Chillon, the black gorge that lets in the turbid Rhone; churches with square towers and ivy-covered walls; and yonder the inexorable mountains of Savoy. For a little while her eye took in every detail of the scene: and then it all melted from her troubled gaze, and she saw not that grand Alpine chain, showing cloudlike amid the clouds, but the brown Avon and its dipping willows, the low Warwickshire hills and village gables, the distant spire of Stratford above the many-arched bridge, the water-meadows at South Hill, and the long fringe of yellow daffodils waving in the March wind.

"Oh for the reedy banks and shallow reaches of the Avon!" she thought, her heart yearning for home.

Then with bowed head she bent over her oars,

and the light boat shot away across the wake of a passing steamer; it shot away, far away to the middle of the lake; it vanished like a feather blown by a summer breeze; and it never came back again.

The empty boat drifted ashore at Evian in the gray light of morning, while Gerald Goring, with a couple of Swiss boatmen, was rowing about the lake, stopping to make inquiries at every landing-place, sending scouts in every direction, in quest of that missing craft. No one ever knew, no one dared to guess, how it had happened: but everyone knew that in some dark spot below that deep blue water Daphne was at rest. The dog had been down by the boathouse all night, howling fitfully through the dark silent hours. He had not left the spot since Daphne's boat glided away from the steps.

It had been a night of anguish and terror for all that household at Montreux—a night of agitation, of alternations of hope and fear. Even Sir Vernon was profoundly moved by anxiety

about the daughter to whom he had given so little of his love. He knew that he had been hard and merciless in that last interview. He had thought only of Madoline; and the knowledge that Madoline had been wronged—that the elder sister's love had been tempted to falsehood by the arts and coquetries of the younger sister—had stung him to a frenzy of anger. Nothing could be too bad for the ingrate who had sinned against the best of sisters. He was too hard a man to give the sinner the benefit of the doubt, and to believe that she had sinned unconsciously. In his mind Daphne had wickedly and deliberately corrupted the heart of her sister's affianced husband. Angry as he had felt with Gerald, his indignation against the weaker vessel was fiercer than his wrath against the stronger.

Mowser had told her story with truth as to the main facts; but with such embellishments and heightened colouring as made Daphne appear the boldest and most depraved of her sex. In Mowser's version of that scene in the pine-wood there was no hint of temptation resisted,

of a noble soul struggling with an unworthy passion, of a tender heart trying to be faithful to sisterly affection, while every impulse of a passionate love tugged the other way. All Mowser could tell was that Miss Daphne had sobbed in Mr. Goring's arms, that he had kissed her, as she, Mowser, had never been kissed, although she had kept company and been on the brink of marriage with a builder's foreman; and that they had talked of being married at Geneva—leastways Mr. Goring had asked Miss Daphne to run away with him for that purpose, and she had not said no, but had only begged him to give her twenty-four hours—naturally requiring that time to pack her clothes and make all needful preparation for flight.

Passionately attached to his elder daughter, and always ready to think evil of Daphne, Sir Vernon needed no confirmation of Mowser's story. It was only the realisation of what he had always feared—the mother's falsehood showing itself in the daughter—hereditary baseness. It was the girl's nature to betray. She had all her mother's

outward graces and too fascinating prettiness. How could he have hoped that she would have any higher notions of truth and honour?

Moved to deepest wrath at the wrong done to Madoline, Sir Vernon's first impulse had been to send for Gerald Goring, in order to come to an immediate understanding with that offender. He was told that Mr. Goring had gone to Geneva, and was not expected home before eight o'clock. He then sent for Edgar, and to that unhappy lover bluntly and almost brutally related the story of Daphne's baseness. Edgar was inclined to disbelieve, nay, even to laugh Mowser's slander to scorn; but Mowser, summoned to a second interview, stuck resolutely to her text, and was not to be shaken.

"I can't believe it," faltered Edgar, stricken to the heart, "unless I hear it from her own lips."

"Go and fetch her," said Sir Vernon to Mowser, and then had followed Daphne's appearance, and those admissions of hers which told Edgar only too clearly how he had been deceived.

The two men, Gerald and Edgar, passed each

other on the railway between Lausanne and Geneva —Edgar on his way to the city, Gerald going back to Montreux. Mr. Goring wondered at seeing his friend's pale face glide slowly by as the two trains crossed at the junction.

"It looks as if she had given him his quietus already," he said to himself. "My brave little Daphne!"

He was going back to Montreux with his heart full of hope and gladness. He had taken all the needful measures at Geneva to make his marriage with Daphne an easy matter, would she but consent to marry him. And he had no doubt of her consent. Could a girl love as she loved, and obstinately withhold herself from her lover?

He forgot the pain he must inflict on one who had been so dear; forgot the woman who had been the guiding star of his boyhood and youth; forgot everything except that one consummate bliss which he longed for—the triumph of a passionate love. That crown of life once snatched from reluctant Fate, all other things would come right in time. Madoline's gentle nature would forgive a wrong

which was the work of destiny rather than of man's falsehood. Sir Vernon would be angry and unpleasant, no doubt; but Gerald Goring cared very little about Sir Vernon. The world would wonder; but Gerald cared nothing for the world. He only desired Daphne, and Daphne's love; having all other good things which life, looked at from the worldling's standpoint, could give.

The sun was setting as he approached Montreux, and all the lake was clothed in golden light. Rose-hued mountains, golden water, smiled at him as if in welcome.

"What a lovely world it is!" he said to himself; "and how happy Daphne and I will be in it—in spite of Fate and metaphysical aid. There I go, quoting the Inevitable, as usual!"

He walked quickly from the station to the villa, eager to see Daphne, to hear her voice, to touch the warm soft hand, and be assured that there was such a being, and that he had not been the dupe of some vision of intangible loveliness, as Shelley's Alastor was in the cavern. That last look of Daphne's haunted him—so direct, so solemn a gaze, so unlike

the shy glance of conscious love. Nay, it resembled rather the look of some departed spirit, returning from Pluto's drear abode to take its last fond farewell of the living.

The vestibule stood open to the road, an outer hall filled with plants and flowers, an airy Italian-looking entrance. Gerald walked straight in, and to the drawing-room. It was striking eight as he entered.

"I hope you won't wait for me," he began, looking round for Daphne; "I am a dusty object, and I don't think I can make myself presentable under twenty minutes. The train dawdled abominably."

Mrs. Ferrers and Madoline were standing by the open window, looking out. Lina turned, and at the first glimpse of her pale face Gerald knew that there was something wrong. There had been a scene, perhaps, between the sisters. Daphne had betrayed herself and him. Well! The truth must be told very soon now. It were best to precipitate matters.

"We are frightened about Daphne," said Lina;

"she went out in her boat a little before five—the gardener saw her leave—and she has not come back yet."

Three hours. It was long, but she was fond of solitary excursions on the lake.

"I don't think there is much cause for alarm in that," he said, trying to speak lightly, yet with a strange terror at his heart. "Shall I get a boat and go after her? I had better, perhaps; she cannot be very far off—dawdling about by Chillon, I daresay. Those dank stone walls have a fascination for her."

"Yes, I shall be glad, if you don't mind going. My father seems uneasy. It is so strange that she should stay away three hours without leaving word where she was going. Edgar is out. My aunt and I have not known what to do, and when I told my father just now he looked dreadfully alarmed."

"I will go this instant, and not come back till I have found her," answered Gerald huskily.

That last look of Daphne's was in his mind. That never-to-be-forgotten look from her dark eyes lifted fearlessly, with sad and steady gaze.

"Oh God! did it mean farewell?"

He was out on the lake all night, with two of the most experienced boatmen in the district, and it was only in the gray of morning that he heard of the empty boat blown ashore a little below Evian —Evian, where they had landed so merrily once from the same cockleshell boat, on a sunny morning, for a pilgrimage to a drowsy village on the hills, a cluster of picturesque homesteads sheltered by patriarchal walnut and chestnut trees, where looking downward through the rich foliage they saw the blue lake below.

The evening had been calm. There had been no accident or collision of any kind on the lake; the little boat showed no sign of injury. It lay on the shingly shore, just as the fishermen had pulled it in; an empty boat. That was all.

Gerald stayed at Evian, and from Evian wrote briefly to Madoline telling her all.

"My life for the last six months has been a tissue of lies," he wrote; "and yet, God knows, I have tried to be true and honest, just as she tried; but she with more purpose, yes, poor child!

with much more fidelity than mine. I wanted to tell you the truth when we were at Fribourg, to make an end of all shams and deceptions, but she would not let me. She meant to hold to her bond with Edgar—to be true to you. She would have persevered in this to the end, if I had let her. But I would not, and she has died rather than do you a wrong; it is my guilt—mine alone. The brand of Cain is on me: and, like Cain, I shall be a wanderer till I die. I do not ask you to forgive me, for I shall never forgive myself; or to pity me, for mine is a grief which pity cannot touch. If I could hope that you could ever forget me there would be comfort in the thought; but I dare not hope for that. You might forget your false lover, but how can you forget Daphne's murderer?"

To this letter Madoline answered briefly: "You have broken my sister's heart and mine. A little honesty, a little truth, would have spared us both. You might have been happy in your own way, and I might have kept my sister. You are right—I can neither forget nor forgive. I thought till this

trouble came upon me that I was a Christian; I know now, God help me! how far I am away from Christian feeling. All I can hope or pray about you is that we two may never see each other's faces again. I send you Daphne's legacy."

Enclosed in the letter was the little packet containing the turquoise ring, with "For Mr. Goring" written on the cover in Daphne's dashing penmanship. The hand had not trembled, though the heart beat high, when that superscription was penned.

Sir Vernon stayed at Montreux for more than a month after that fatal summer day, though the very sight of lake and mountain in their inexorable beauty, so remote from all human trouble or human pity, was terrible to him. Madoline urged him to stay. There were hours in which, after many tears and many prayers, faint gleams of hope visited her sorrowful soul. Daphne might not be dead. She might have landed unnoticed at one of those quiet villages, and made her way to some distant place where she could live hidden

and unknown. Those farewell gifts left in her desk must needs mean a deliberate departure: but they need not mean death. She might be hiding somewhere, little knowing the agony she was inflicting on those who had loved her, fearing only to be found and taken home. Madoline could fancy her sister self-sacrificing enough to live apart from home and kindred all her days, to earn her bread in a stranger's house. Oh, if it were thus only, and not that other and awful fate—a young life flung away in its flower, a young soul going forth unbidden to meet God's judgment, burdened with the deadly sin of self-murder!

"Let us stay a few days longer, father," she pleaded. "We may hear something. There may be some good news."

"God grant that it may be so," answered Sir Vernon, without a ray of hope.

What of his remorse whose hardness had pressed so heavily upon his child in that last hour of her brief life, whose bitter words had perhaps confirmed the sinner in her desperate

resolve, making it very clear to her that this earth held no peaceful haven, that for her there was no fatherly breast on which she could pour out the story of her weakness and her struggle—no friend with the father's sacred name from whom she could ask counsel or seek protection? Alone in her misery, she had sought the one refuge which remained for her—death; believing that by that fatal deed she would secure her sister's peace.

"His heart will return to its truer nobler love when I am gone," she had said to herself. Poor shallow soul, unsustained by any deep sense of religion, or by any firm principle; tender heart, strong in unquestioning fidelity. It was easy to follow out the train of false reasoning which made her believe that death would be best; that in throwing away her fair young life she was making a sacrifice to love and honour.

They remained at Montreux till the beginning of October, till autumnal tints were stealing over the landscape, and the happy vintage-

time had begun, making all those gentle slopes alive with picturesque figures, every turn in the road a scene for a painter. It was a dreary time for Madoline and her father. Edgar was with them; called back from Geneva by a telegram on the night of Daphne's disappearance. He, like his rival, had been unweary in his endeavour to obtain some knowledge of Daphne's fate. He had been from village to village, had made his inquiries at every landing-place along the lake —had availed himself of every local intelligence; but all to no purpose. One of the Vevey boatmen had seen Daphne's light skiff as she rowed swiftly towards the middle of the lake. He saw the little boat dancing in the wake of a steamer, watched it and its girl-owner till it floated into smooth water, and then saw the boat never more.

There had been no reason for an accident upon that particular afternoon; no sudden gust of wind; no mysterious rising of the lake; nothing. In a sultry calm the little boat had last been seen gliding smoothly over the smooth blue water.

Had she rowed to the end of the lake, where

the tumultuous Rhone rushes in from rocky St. Maurice, and been swamped by those turbid waters? Who could tell? The stranded boat bore no sign of having been under water.

The time came when they must go back, when to remain any longer by the lake seemed mere foolishness, a persistent brooding upon sorrow; more especially as Sir Vernon's health had become much worse since this calamity had fallen upon him, and a change of some kind was imperative.

Aunt Rhoda had gone home a week after the fatal day, though to the last expressing herself willing to remain and comfort Madoline.

"You are very kind, Aunt, but you could not comfort me. You did not care for her," Lina answered, with a touch of bitterness.

So Mrs. Ferrers, aggrieved at this rebuff, had gone back to her Rector, whom she found more painfully affected by Daphne's evil fate than she thought consistent with his clerical character.

"I shall never look at the garden in summer-time without thinking of that bright face and girlish figure flitting about among the roses, as I have seen

her in the days that are gone," he said; "a man of my age is uncomfortably reminded of his shortening lease of life when the young are taken before him."

And now that bitter day came upon which Madoline was obliged to leave the banks of the fatal lake, and turn her sad face homewards, to South Hill. South Hill without Daphne, without Gerald—those two familiar figures gone out of her life for ever; the house empty of laughter and gladness for evermore! All the sweetest things of life proved false, every hope crushed, every possibility of future happiness gone from her for ever! She could imagine no new hopes, no fresh beginning of life. To do her duty to an invalid father; to use her ample fortune for the comfort and advantage of the friendless and the needy, was all that remained to her; a narrow round of daily tasks not less monotonous than the humblest chars, because she wore a silk gown and lived in a fine house. So far her prayer had been granted. She and Gerald Goring had never met since Daphne's death. He had been heard of at Evian and then at Vevey; but none of the South Hill people had seen him.

Edgar went back with them, a man so changed by grief that it would be hard for the mother, who had seen him go forth in the strength and gladness of happy youth, to recognise the haggard hopeless countenance of the son who returned to her. He had borne his trouble bravely, asking comfort from no one, anxious to console others whenever consolation seemed possible. He had tried his best to persuade Madoline that Daphne's boat had been overturned by the current, that the sweet young life had been lost by accident. Those carefully-sealed packets in the desk hinted at a darker doom; yet it might be that they had been prepared by Daphne under some vague idea of leaving home, in order to escape the difficulties of her position; an intention to be carried out at some indefinite time.

Hawksyard in the autumn, with white vapours stealing over the low meadows at sunrise and sunset, with the large leaves of the walnut-trees drifting heavily down, seemed a fitting place for a man to nurse his grief and meditate upon the greatness of his loss. Edgar roamed about the gardens

and the fields like an unquiet spirit, or rode for long hours in the lonely lanes, keeping as much as possible aloof from all who knew him. Even the approach of the hunting season gave him no pleasure.

"I shall not hunt this year," he told his mother. "Indeed I doubt if I shall ever follow the hounds again."

"Don't say that, Edgar," cried Mrs. Turchill plaintively. "Wretched as I am every day you are out with the hounds, I should be still more miserable if you were to deprive yourself of your favourite amusement. But you will think differently next October, I hope, dear. It isn't natural for young people to go on grieving for ever."

"Isn't it, mother?" asked her son bitterly. "Isn't it natural for a watch to stop when its mainspring is broken?"

The application of this inquiry was beyond Mrs. Turchill, so she made no attempt to answer it.

She had been very good to her son since his

sorrowful home-coming, not tormenting him with futile consolations, but offering him that silent sympathy which has always healing in it. Of Daphne's fate she knew no more than that the girl had gone out on the lake one sunny afternoon and had never come back again. The announcement in *The Times* had said: "Accidentally drowned in the Lake of Geneva," and Mrs. Turchill had never thought of seeking to know more. But she was much exercised in her mind as the autumn wore into winter at the prolonged absence of Gerald Goring.

"Why does not Mr. Goring come back?" she inquired of Edgar. "I should think poor Miss Lawford must need his society now more than ever. It is natural that the wedding should be postponed for a few months; but Mr. Goring ought not to be away."

"That engagement is broken off, mother," her son answered briefly.

"Broken off! But why?"

"I can't tell you. That concerns no one but

Miss Lawford and Mr. Goring. Don't trouble about it, mother."

At any other time Mrs. Turchill would have troubled very much about such a piece of intelligence, would have insisted upon knowing the rights and wrongs of the matter, and of expatiating upon it at her leisure. But her respect for Edgar's grief made her very discreet; and, seeing that the subject was painful to him, she said no more about it. No more to him, that is to say, but very much more to Rebecca, to whom she discoursed freely upon the extraordinary fact, delicately suggesting that as Rebecca was on intimate terms with the upper servants at South Hill, she would no doubt hear all the ins and outs of the story in due time.

"I should be the last person to encourage gossip," remarked the matron with dignity, "but there are some things which people cannot help talking about, especially where a young lady is as much beloved and respected as Miss Lawford."

Rebecca went to South Hill on her next Sunday

out, and drank tea in the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Spicer, though unable to speak with dry eyes of Miss Daphne, was nevertheless much interested in the fit and fashion of her black gown, the quality of which Rebecca both appraised and admired. But Mrs. Spicer only knew that Miss Lawford's engagement was broken off. She knew nothing as to the why and the wherefore, but she surmised, somewhat vaguely, that Miss Lawford had turned against Mr. Goring after her sister's death.

Only one of the South Hill servants could have explained the cause of that cancelled engagement, and she had been dismissed with a handsome pension, and had gone to live in the outskirts of Birmingham, with her own kith and kin. Sir Vernon could never endure the presence of the faithful Mowser after Daphne's death. "You did your duty, according to your lights, I have no doubt," he said, when he sent her away; "but I can never look at you without regretting that you did not hold your tongue. You have told Miss Lawford nothing—about—that scene in the pine-wood, I hope?"

Mowser protested that she would have had her tongue cut out rather than speak one such word to her mistress.

"I am glad of that. She knows too much already—enough to make her life miserable. We must spare her what pain we can."

Mowser assented, with a convulsion of her elderly throat, which looked like a repressed sob. The pension promised was liberal; but it was a hard thing to be dismissed, to be told that life at South Hill could be carried on without her.

"I don't know what Miss Lawford will do when I'm gone," she faltered tearfully; "I'm used to her ways, and she's used to mine. A strange maid will seem like an antelope to her."

Sir Vernon stared, but did not deign to discuss the probabilities as to his daughter's feelings. He ordered Jinman—who on the strength of knowing two or three dozen substantives in French and Italian, considered himself an accomplished linguist—to conduct Mrs. Mowser to Geneva, and to book her through, so far as it were possible, to her native shores. He felt that he could breathe

more freely when that evil presence was out of the house. "She provoked me to torture that poor child in her last hour upon earth," he thought. "She maddened me with the idea that Lina's lover had been stolen from her."

CHAPTER XII.

"SENS LOVE HATH BROUGHT US TO THIS PITEOUS END."

FROM THE REV. JULIAN TEMPLE TO MISS AYLMER.

"Schaffhausen, *September* 11*th*, 187—.

"My dear Flora,

"You ask me for a detailed account of the melancholy accident on the Matterhorn, of which I had the misfortune to be an eye-witness, and the memory of which will haunt me for years to come—yes, even in that blessed time when I shall be quietly settled down in domestic life with my dear girl, and must needs have a thousand reasons for being completely happy.

"I kept you so well posted in my movements, until the occurrence of this unhappy event made

it painful to me to write about our Alpine experiences, that you no doubt remember how Trevor and I, after our successful attempt upon the Finsteraarhorn, made our way quietly down to Zermatt, by way of Thun and Vispach. Never shall I forget the calm delight of the last day's walk between Vispach and Zermatt. The distance is only thirty miles, we were in high spirits and in excellent condition for the tramp, and we had a cart for our mountaineering gear, and our knapsacks, so were able to take things easily.

"We started at six o'clock, breakfasted at St. Nicolas, and reached Zermatt early in the evening. Our road—a mule-path for the greater part of the way—led us through scenes of infinite variety, and opened to us views of surpassing grandeur and beauty. Amidst all the wildness of a mountainous landscape we were struck with the profusion of flowers which gave life and colour to the foreground, and the wild fruits which rivalled the flowers in their vivid beauty; beds of Alpine strawberries, thickets of raspberries and barberries

bordered the path, and every village we entered lay sheltered amidst patriarchal walnut or chestnut trees.

"How can I describe to you the glory of the Matterhorn, as that mighty monolith reveals itself for the first time to the eye of the traveller?—an obelisk of dazzling whiteness cleaving the blue sky, blanking out earth and heaven with its gigantic form, the one mountain-peak which reigns supreme in a kingly solitude, not lifting his proud head from a group of brother peaks, not buttressed by inferior hills, but solitary as the Prince of Darkness, a being apart and alone. Mont Blanc overawes by massive grandeur, but I should choose the Matterhorn for the monarch of mountains.

"The sun was setting as we crossed the Visp for the last time before entering Zermatt. Trevor and I had been in the gayest spirits throughout our journey. We had rested two hours at St. Nicolas, and had taken a leisurely luncheon at Randa. We were full of talk about the day after to-morrow, which date we had chosen for our attempt on the Matterhorn, thinking it wise to give ourselves a day's rest, or at least partial rest, after our thirty

miles' walk, and to leave time for engaging guides and making all necessary preparations in a leisurely manner.

"Trevor was a stranger to the district, but he has done much good work on Mont Blanc, and he had behaved so well on the Finsteraarhorn that I had no doubt of his metal. I had familiarised myself with the Monte Rosa group three years before, and I knew the Zermatt guides and their ways and manners. We interviewed some of these gentry after our dinner, and I picked two of the sturdiest and trustiest, made my bargain with them, and told them to examine our ropes and other gear carefully by daylight next morning.

"We had a pleasant evening, sauntering about the quiet little town in the light of a glorious full moon, smoking our cigars, talking of our future prospects, of the Church, and of you. Yes, dear love, Trevor is just one of those faithful souls with whom a man can talk about his sweetheart.

"Next morning we breakfasted at daybreak and started luxuriously on a brace of mules for the Riffelberg, to reconnoitre our mountain. How grand and beautiful was the circle of snow-clad

peaks which we beheld from that dark hillside: Monte Rosa on the south-east, on the south-west the Matterhorn, on the east the Cima de Jassi, to the west the Dent Blanche, to the north-eastward the Dom, and westward the Weisshorn—gigantic crags and domes and solitary peaks, all bathed in sunshine, and as dazzling in their glorified whiteness as the sun himself! We spent some hours in quiet contemplation of that sublime and awful scene, gazing at that circle of Titanic peaks, which had a sphynx-like and mysterious air as they looked back at us in their dumb unapproachable majesty.

"'Is it not a kind of blasphemy to pollute them with our footsteps, to be always trying to get nearer and nearer to them, into Nature's Holy of Holies?'" I asked, carried away by the grandeur of the scene.

"But Trevor's manner of looking at the question was practical rather than imaginative.

"'I shouldn't like to go back without having done the Matterhorn,' he said, 'though the terrible accident a few years ago makes one inclined to be cautious.'

"We had a rough-and-ready luncheon on the

Rothe Kumm, and took our time about the descent. It was nearly dark when we got back to Zermatt. The *table-d'hôte* dinner was over, and we dined together at a small table in a corner of the coffee-room, a table near a window, which stood open to a verandah. As we took our seats we noticed that there was a gentleman sitting smoking a little way from the window. I sat facing him, and as we began dinner he asked politely whether his cigar annoyed us. This broke the ice, and he began to talk of our intended ascent, which he had heard of from the guides.

"'I should very much like to join you,' he said. 'We could take another guide if you think it advisable. I am used to Alpine climbing. I came here on purpose to ascend the Matterhorn, and I shall do it in any case; but it would be pleasant to have congenial company,' he added, with a light laugh.

"'Pleasant for us as well as for you,' I replied, for there was something particularly winning in his manner; 'but you must not consider me impertinent if I say that you hardly seem in strong enough health for mountain climbing. You look as if you had not long recovered from a severe illness.'

"'Do I?' he asked, in the same light tone; 'I was always a sallow individual. No, I have not been ill; and I am sinewy and wiry enough for pretty hard work in the climbing way, though I have no superfluous flesh. I don't think you'll find me an encumbrance to you; but if you have any doubt upon the subject you can ask your chief guide, Peter Hirsch, for my character. He and I have done some pretty radid ascents together in past years.'

"He handed me his card. 'Mr. Goring, Goring Abbey, Warwickshire.'

"There was nothing of the braggart about him, and I had no doubt as to his Alpine experience, but I could not dispossess myself of the idea that he was in weak health, and out of condition for a fatiguing ascent; for though the approach to the Matterhorn has been made much easier than it was in '65, when it was ascended for the first time by Mr. Whymper and three other gentlemen, with most lamentable results, it is still a toughish piece of work.

"I heard a good deal of Mr. Goring later from our landlord; he was well known in the district,

and known as an experienced mountaineer. He was a man of large wealth, very generous, very good to the poor. He had been living in Switzerland for the past year, shifting from town to town along the banks of Lake Leman, but never leaving the shores of the lake, until a few weeks ago, when he set out on a walking expedition to Italy. He had stopped at Zermatt on his way southward; had idled away his days in a listless purposeless way; now doing a little climbing, now spending whole days lying about in the woods, with his books and his sketching materials. He kept himself as much aloof from the tourists as it was possible for him to do, occupying his own rooms, and never dining at the *table-d'hôte*; and the landlord was surprised that he should wish to join our party. His story was at once romantic and tragical. He had come to Montreux with the family of the young lady to whom he was engaged. This young lady was accidentally drowned in the lake last summer, and Mr. Goring had never left the scene of her untimely death till he came to Zermatt.

"I asked the landlord if there was any fear of his mind being affected by this trouble, and he assured me that there was not the slightest ground for such an idea. Mr. Goring kept himself to himself; but he was as rational and as clever a man to talk to as any gentleman the landlord had ever known.

"This settled the matter. To make assurance doubly sure I engaged a third guide, and a young man to help in carrying tent, ropes, etc., and we set out, a little party of seven, gaily enough, in the early morning. We meant to take things quietly, and to spend the first night in the tent, or in blanket bags, if the weather were as mild as it promised to be. We carried provisions enough to last for three days, in case the ascent should take even longer than we anticipated. We took sketching materials, a tin box for any botanical or entomological specimens we might collect, and two or three well-worn volumes of poetry which had accompanied us in all our excursions, but had not been largely read. The great and varied book of Nature had generally proved all-sufficient.

"We left Zermatt soon after five, the Lac Noir between eight and nine, and a little before noon we had chosen our spot for a camping-place, eleven thousand feet high, and the men set to work making a platform for the tent, while we took our ease on the mountain, basking in the sunshine, sketching, collecting a little, and talking a great deal. We found Mr. Goring a delightful companion. He was a man of considerable culture; had travelled much and read much. There was a dash of nineteenth-century cynicism in his talk, and it was but too easy to see that his view of this life and the world beyond it was of that sombre hue which so deeply overshadows modern thought. Still he was a most agreeable companion; and Trevor told me more than once, in a confidential aside, that our new acquaintance was a decided acquisition.

"In all our conversation, which was perfectly unreserved on all sides, it was noticeable that Mr. Goring talked very little of himself or of his own affairs. He spoke vaguely of an idea of going on to Italy, and wintering at Naples, but

rather as an intention he had entertained and abandoned, than as one which he meant to carry out.

"I ventured to say that I should have thought that, for a man of his culture, Paris or Berlin would have been a pleasanter wintering-place; but he shrugged his shoulders and declared that he detested both these cities, and the society to be found in them. 'French charlatanism or German pedantry,' he said, 'God knows which is worse.'

"There was a magnificent sunset. Never shall I forget the awful beauty of the sky and mountains as we watched the decline of that ineffable glory—watched in silence, subdued to gravity by the unspeakable grandeur of that mighty panorama, in the midst of which our own littleness was brought painfully home to our minds.

"The night was singularly mild, and we preferred sleeping in our blanket-bags to the stuffy atmosphere of a tent.

"We were up before daybreak next morning, and breakfasted merrily enough by the light of the stars, which were dropping out of the purple sky, like lamps burned out, as the colder light

of day crept slowly along the edges of the eastward snow-peaks—such a livid ghastly light. I remember wondering at Mr. Goring's good spirits, which seemed by no means to accord with the landlord's account of him. Had there been anything forced or hysterical about his gaiety I should have taken alarm: but nothing could be easier or more natural than his manner; and I was pleased to think that, however deeply he might regret the poor girl whom he had lost by so sad a fate, he had his hours of forgetfulness and tranquillity.

"We made the ascent slowly but easily, our guides seeing no risk from any quarter; and between one and two o'clock we stood on the top of that peak which of all others had most impressed me by its grand air of solitude and inaccessibility. Throughout the ascent Mr. Goring had shown himself a skilful and experienced mountaineer; and there was no thought further from my mind than the apprehension of hazard to him more than to anyone of us in the descent, or of recklessness on his part.

"We stayed on the summit a little over an hour,

and then prepared ourselves for the descent. There were some difficult bits to be passed in going down, and it was suggested by the most experienced of the guides that we should be all roped together with the stoutest of our Alpine-Club ropes. But this Mr. Goring negatived. 'Where there is only one rope, a false step for one means death to all,' he said. 'It was that which caused the calamity in Mr. Whymper's descent; if the rope had not broken there would not have been a man left to tell the story of that fatal day.' At his urgent request we formed ourselves into three parties, each of the guides being roped to one of us. He chose the least experienced of the three men, and he, with this youngest of the guides, went first.

"'You need not be afraid about me,' he said cheerily. 'I am as sure-footed as the best guide in Zermatt.'

"The two men who were with us assented heartily to this, and my own observation went far to assure me that Mr. Goring's assertion was no idle boast.

"Those were the last words I ever heard him speak. We were all intent upon the descent,

the guides cutting footsteps now and then in the ice. There was neither inclination nor opportunity for much talk of any kind. Mr. Goring and his companion moved more quickly than we did; and I began to fear, as I saw the two dark figures ever so far below us amidst the dazzling whiteness, that there was a dash of recklessness in him after all.

"This made me feel uneasy, and I found my attention wandering from my own position, which was not without peril, to those two in advance of us. Suddenly, to my surprise, I saw Goring change places with the guide, who until this moment had been foremost. I saw also in the same instant that the rope which had been hanging somewhat loosely between them a minute or so before—always a source of danger—was now tightly braced. It seemed to me that Goring stood still for a moment or two, looking down the sheer precipice that yawned on one side of him, as if admiring the awful grandeur of the abyss, then I saw a sharp sudden movement of his right arm; there was a cry from the guide, and in the next moment a dark figure slid with a fearful velocity along the

smooth whiteness of the frozen snow, and then shot over the edge, and dropped from precipice to precipice to the Matterhorn glacier below, a distance of nearly four thousand feet. How the guide contrived to maintain his footing in that awful moment I know not. He never could have done it had the rope been slack before it broke —or was severed. In those last words lies the saddest part of the story. It is the guide's opinion, and mine, that the rope was deliberately cut by Mr. Goring. He could scarcely have done this all at once by one movement of his knife; but the guide believes that he had contrived to cut it three parts through, unobserved by him, in the course of the descent. I asked how it came about that he and the guide changed places, and the young man told me that it was at Mr. Goring's desire, a desire so calmly and naturally expressed that it had occasioned neither wonder nor alarm.

"His body has not been found, though the people of Zermatt have been diligent in their search. He lies locked in his frozen tomb in some crevasse of the glacier.

"A very beautiful marble cross has been erected to his memory in the little churchyard at Zermatt. I am told that it exactly resembles one that was placed last year in the churchyard at Montreux, in memory of the young lady who was drowned in the lake near that town.

"It may interest you to know that Mr. Goring's will bequeaths the whole of his enormous fortune to the elder sister of this unfortunate lady, the testator being assured that she will make a much more noble use of that fortune than he could ever have done.

"Those are the words of the legacy."

THE END.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS, CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.